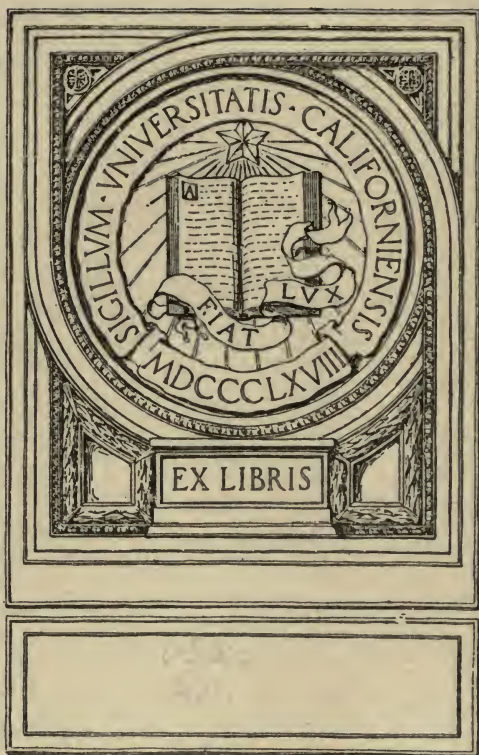
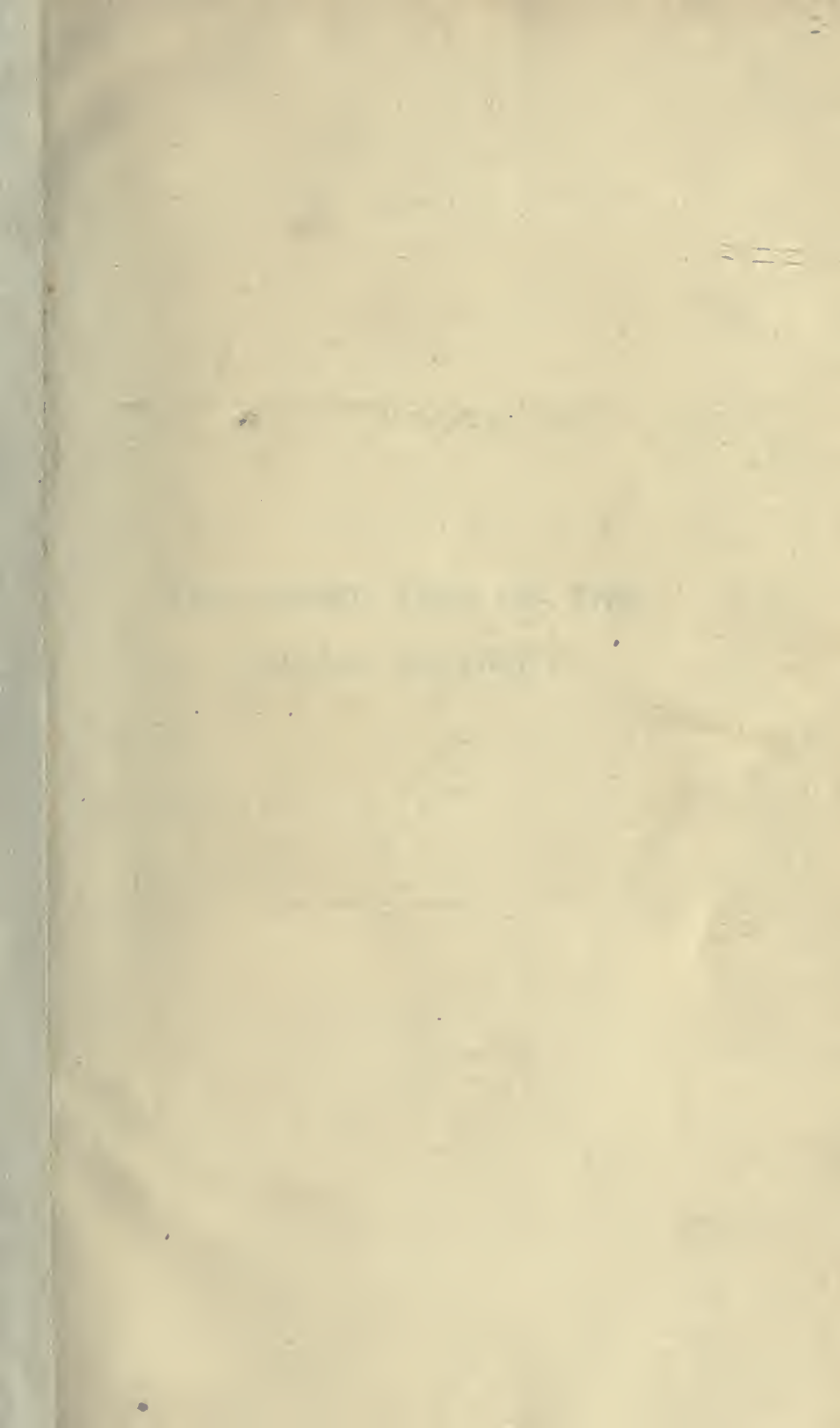


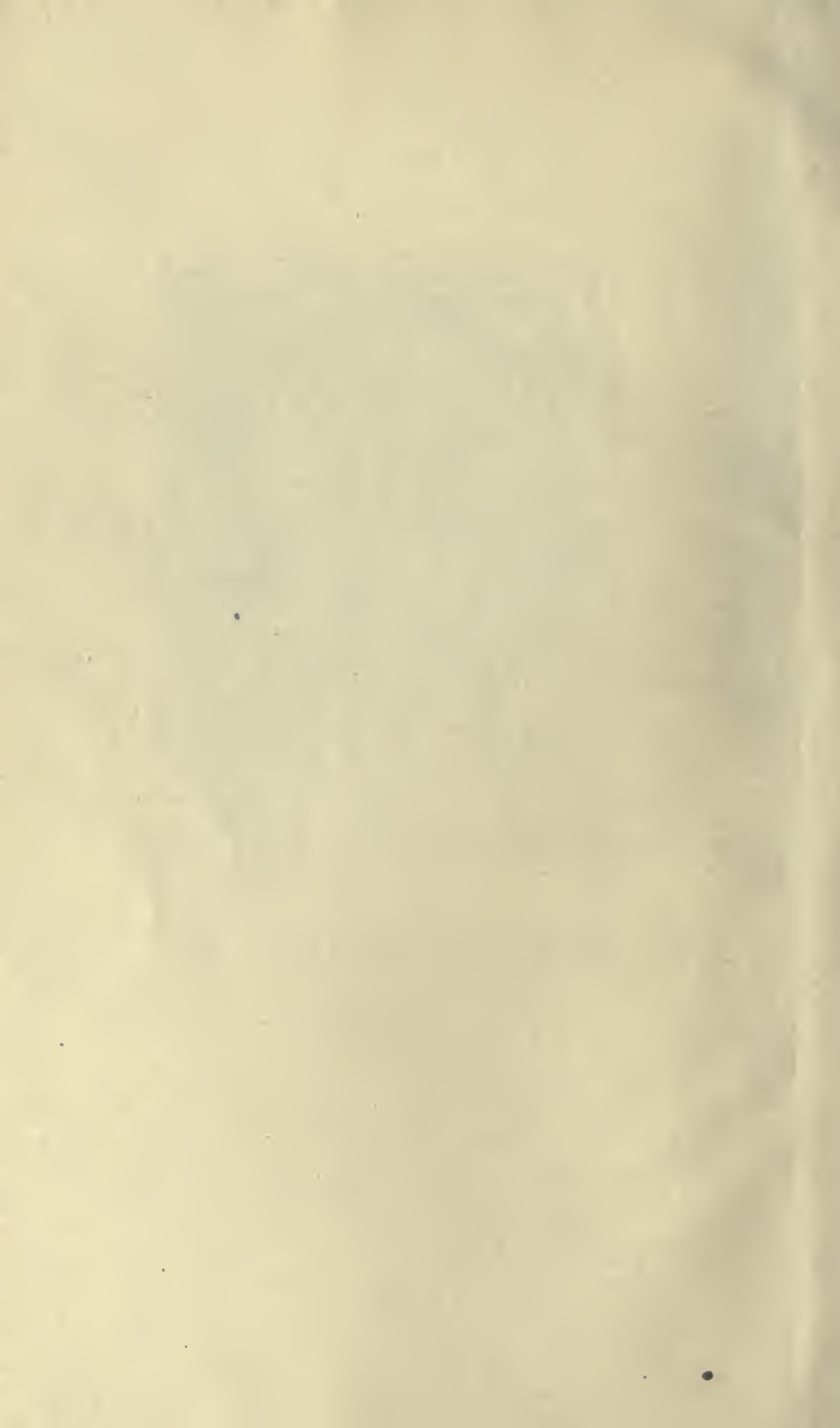
THE INNER LIFE  
OF THE  
ROYAL ACADEMY

G. D. LESLIE R.A.

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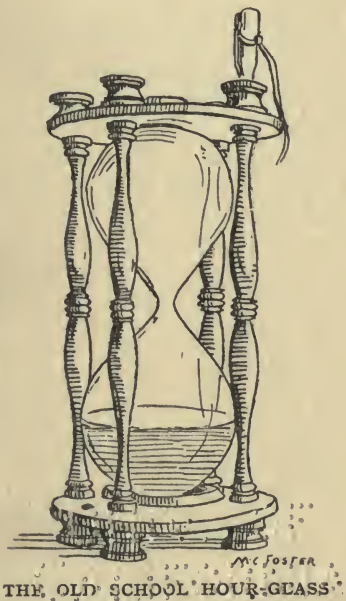
# THE INNER LIFE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF ITS SCHOOLS AND  
EXHIBITIONS PRINCIPALLY IN THE REIGN  
OF QUEEN VICTORIA

BY GEORGE DUNLOP LESLIE, R.A.

||

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET. W.

1914

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## PREFACE

To my parentage, to my own long life, and to a variety of other fortunate circumstances, I owe the fact that I have perhaps enjoyed greater opportunities for an intimate acquaintance with the Royal Academy, its Schools, its Councils, its Assemblies, and all that may be termed its "Inner Life" than most of my colleagues, and it has been suggested to me by several of these that I should undertake some such work as the present, with a view to dispelling, in a measure, the ignorance and the misconceptions that generally prevail with regard to the work and usefulness of the Institution, and to refuting, as far as possible, the accusations, both open and covert, with which it is so frequently assailed.

Though what I have written must in no sense be considered as an authoritative work, issued with approval or sanction of the members of the Academy as a whole, I have endeavoured to make it, as far as facts are concerned, as truthful and accurate as I possibly can, aiding my memory at times by references both to the Annual Reports of the transactions of the Academy and to the books of reference in its library. As no annual reports were issued until 1873, the account I have given of the Schools and of the general management of the Institution, during the earlier half of the last century, is derived chiefly from my father's writings and from what I heard myself from his lips. In reminiscences concerning various members, I have confined myself to those with whom I was either very intimate or with whom I was associated on the Councils, and to a few others, old friends of my father's, whom I knew when I was young.

Whilst I have been engaged in writing these lines another distinguished member has been taken from us, the extraordinarily gifted and versatile Sir Hubert von Herkomer. Want of time and space prevents me from saying more of him here than that I became acquainted with him when he was but eighteen years old, and that

from that time to the end of his brilliant career I enjoyed his warm and unbroken friendship.

If some of the stories and incidents that I have introduced may seem to my readers somewhat trivial, my answer must be that trivial incidents very often help to throw sidelights upon the life of such an institution as the Royal Academy. I do not pretend that what I have written can in any way be considered to be a history of the Royal Academy during the last century, yet I have hopes that it may afford useful material for a history to any one who may undertake such a work in the future.

At the commencement of my task I had greatly relied on assistance which had been promised me by our late Secretary, Sir Frederick Eaton. He had offered to revise my manuscript, and to verify all the facts concerning the Academy, to which allusion might be made. His illness and deeply lamented death unexpectedly deprived me of his kindly help. The severity of the loss suffered by the Royal Academy by that death can scarcely be overstated. For forty years he had fulfilled his duties with the utmost loyalty and ability, beloved and esteemed by four successive presidents and by all the Academicians and Associates with whom he had to do during that long period.

Foremost amongst those to whom I am indebted for assistance in the compilation of this work I have to thank most gratefully my nephew, C. R. L. Fletcher, for his careful revision and correction of my manuscript. To Mr Briton Riviere I also owe my sincere thanks for much kind advice and many suggestions. To Messrs Smith, Elder & Co. I tender my best thanks for their permission to reproduce the three illustrations from "Dick Doyle's Journal." To Miss Lydia Spence I am very grateful for being allowed to reproduce the sketch of Turner, now in her possession, which was drawn in 1816 by her great grandfather, C. R. Leslie. I have to thank my niece, Miss Kate Leslie, for allowing me to reproduce the portrait of my father in her possession. And, lastly, I beg to thank my publisher, John Murray, and his son for the help they have afforded me in the production of the book.

G. D. L.

LINDFIELD, SUSSEX,  
*April* 1914.

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# THE INNER LIFE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY

## CHAPTER I

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY

It is astonishing how little the general public knows about the Schools of the Royal Academy. An annual Exhibition of pictures which opens, according to the almanacks, on the first Monday in May, and closes on the first Monday in August, for the admission to which a shilling is charged, and which is managed by a President and a body of artists, entitled to place R.A. after their names in the catalogue and elsewhere, constitutes all that is present in the minds of most people when they speak of the institution in Burlington House as "The Royal Academy."

They talk of having seen the Royal Academy or of not having seen it. The goodness or badness of the pictures, the dresses worn by the ladies of the "Smart Set" who were present at the private view, the question, which is "the picture of the

year"—these things afford useful topics for light conversation during the spring season; but what becomes of the place when the Exhibition is closed, or what is done with the shillings taken at the doors, I feel certain that not one person in a hundred either knows or cares.

And yet it was expressly for the use made of this money and of the funds and for the work carried on when the Exhibition is over, that the Royal Academy was founded in 1769. Schools for the teaching of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture were the objects, the Exhibitions were really only a happy afterthought, the profits of which could be employed for the use of these Schools.

The want of adequate schools for Art-teaching was badly felt during the first half of the eighteenth century. Several attempts were made to supply the want, most of which ended in failure owing to the difficulty of obtaining the necessary funds for their support. Sir John Thornhill, and after him William Hogarth, carried on schools for several years in St Martin's Lane; the Dilettante Society afterwards made an abortive attempt to start a school, but the question of money sooner or later proved fatal to the existence of these foundations.

The great success which attended an exhibition of the works of living painters, in aid of the funds of the Foundling Hospital, at length suggested to the minds of the exhibitors a means of supplying the desired annual funds; and after sundry preliminary wrangles and disagreements the Academy

was founded under Royal patronage, with Sir Joshua Reynolds for its first President.

On the 2nd January 1769 the schools were opened in some temporary rooms in Pall Mall; and on this occasion Sir Joshua delivered the first of his celebrated addresses. These schools have been carried on ever since by the Royal Academy, and have afforded a free art-training to all who could pass the qualifying examination.

Although the method of teaching in the Royal Academy Schools has from time to time met with severe criticism, not only from various outside authorities but from several Royal Academicians themselves, it has seemed wise to the majority of the members to adhere to the principles adopted by the original founders. The teaching is given in the most important of the Schools, that for the study of the "Life," by an annually elected body of members, called Visitors, each of whom acts as sole master of the School for one month. The opponents of this system assert that the students would derive far greater benefit in their training if it were carried on under one master of ability than under the system by which they are passed on from one teacher to another every month. No doubt there is much to be said on either side of the question, but, if a tree is to be judged by its fruits, I think it cannot be denied that the Royal Academy Schools, carried on as they were originally started, have been very successful in their results.

Between the years 1771 and 1913, 207 Royal Academicians have been elected, 129 of whom



were at one time students of the Academy. Amongst these 129 members it is satisfactory to find included the names of such distinguished artists as—Cosway, Stothard, Lawrence, Hoppner, Beechey, Flaxman, Turner, Wilkie, Jackson, Collins, Constable, C. R. Leslie, Etty, Landseer, Hook, Millais, Watts, and Holl. There have been many other artists of distinction who, although they did not become members of the Royal Academy, were at one time students in its Schools, and in this category may be mentioned the names of Haydon, Linnell, Holman Hunt, and Albert Moore.

19<sup>th</sup> During the first half of the eighteenth century very few alterations were made in the laws which regulated the teaching in the Academy Schools. My father on entering as a probationer in 1813 had to pass the same tests as I had to pass in 1852, viz., a drawing in chalk from an antique figure, a drawing of an anatomical figure, and a drawing from the skeleton; these had to be sent in for the approval of the Council, together with a letter, from some responsible member of society, testifying that the candidate was a young man of strict morals and good character. In my father's case the letter of recommendation was written by Benjamin West, the President, to whom he had a letter of introduction from a friend in America. The probationer on entering the Schools had to execute another drawing, from an antique figure, in order to prove that he had not been unduly assisted whilst making the one he had sent in. If the Council were satisfied in this respect the candidate was admitted a student of the Royal

Academy and received a circular ivory ticket with his name and the date of his admission engraved upon it. I have both my father's ticket and my own still in my possession.

The period of studentship has been altered from time to time; it was originally six years, in 1792 it was seven, in 1800 it was extended to ten years, in 1853 it was again reduced to seven, and in 1890 it was fixed at five, these five being divided into periods of three and two years.

In the Antique School the teaching is carried on under the guidance of one person; until quite a recent date this person was the Keeper, who also had, and still has, the general supervision of the whole establishment. The Keeper has to be a full member; he is elected by the General Assembly, has his dwelling-place within the walls of the Academy, is a permanent member of the Council, takes the chair in the absence of the President, and is altogether a very important member of the Society.

The Schools when my father entered them were under the Keepership of Henry Fuseli, a highly educated man of strongly marked personality. He was born in 1741 at Zurich, the native place of his family for many generations: he obtained a first-rate classical education in the *Collegium Carolinum* at Zurich; in 1761 he took holy orders together with Lavater, but in a very short time he discovered that his vocation in life was not for the Church, and he quitted Zurich in company with his friend Lavater, and commenced a long series of travels through almost all the principal states of

Europe, finally settling in England in 1779. During these travels he devoted himself to Art and Literature, deriving means for his support both from the pencil and the pen. Besides being a fine classical scholar Fuseli had mastered Italian, German, and English; he, however, spoke the latter with a strong foreign accent. My father in imitating his conversation always rendered his "this" and "that" by "dis" and "dat."

Fuseli's pictures are not at present held in the same estimation as during his life-time, but, though marked, perhaps, by extreme mannerism and eccentricity, they are at any rate bold and manly attempts at something above the common, with traces here and there of fine poetic imagination. The Mystic Blake greatly admired them, and Fuseli in return showed high appreciation of Blake's works, at times even taking hints from them; he is reported to have said, "Blake is damned good to crib from." I have always admired Fuseli's diploma work; to me it seems full of weird imagination with passages of colour in it of great subtlety and refinement.

Fuseli was elected a Royal Academician in 1790 and Keeper in 1804. From the very first he seems to have made a strong impression on the students, for on the third year of his Keepership he received from them a very beautiful silver vase to mark their sense of the advantages which they had derived from his instruction. This vase was designed by Flaxman and received by Fuseli from the hands of Benjamin Robert Haydon, then one of the students. After Fuseli's



death it became the property of his friend and executor, John Knowles, F.R.S. Flaxman's designs for silver were exquisite, and if this vase is still in existence I envy greatly its present possessor.

There was in my father's time another remarkable personality in the Schools besides the Keeper, namely, the porter. In the first laws of the Academy it is enacted that there shall be one porter with a salary of twenty-five pounds a year and a room in the building, and one sweeper with a salary of ten pounds a year. The porter in 1813 was a certain Samuel Strowger. In my father's "Memoirs of John Constable" (pages 13-14 of the 1845 edition), an account of Strowger will be found. He was originally a Suffolk ploughman, and had been well known to Constable in his youth. He had then joined the Life Guards, and afterwards the Academy bought his discharge and took him into its service as porter and occasional model. Constable and Strowger were great friends all their lives.

My father possessed two beautiful little life studies, by Wilkie, which he said must most certainly have been drawn from Strowger, as they showed unmistakably Sam's easy and graceful figure. My father related that a Visitor on one occasion, finding great difficulty in getting a stiff drilled life guardsman to take the pose, sent for Strowger to assist him. Sam instantly placed himself into the required attitude; even after that and after both Sam and the Visitor had shoved and bent the life guardsman about he still looked

as stiff and awkward as ever, Sam remarking, "He does not feel it, sir."

Besides serving as an occasional model Sam, according to my father, frequently acted as Fuseli's valet. On such occasions Fuseli would sometimes take counsel with Sam—"I have been asked out to dinner, Sam; shall I go?" "That's according to where it is, sir," replied Sam. "At Mr Smirke's, Sam." "Mr Smirke is a very nice gentleman, sir; I only wish I were qualified to go with you, sir." "I wish you were, Sam," said the Keeper.

The students during Fuseli's Keepership got up a testimonial to Sam Strowger which took the form of a huge silver snuff box. My father said it so highly gratified Sam that in return he invited a certain number of the students concerned in the affair to supper at his own house. Mrs Strowger and her daughters sat at the table with the students, but nothing could persuade Sam to do so, and he persisted in waiting on his guests all the evening. Amongst the good things provided for the repast was a pair of roast fowls which Sam had reared himself in his back yard, and which were, he said, fed entirely from the bits of bread left by the students in the Schools, remains of the bread used by them in rubbing out errors in their drawings.

Bread was still used largely when I was a student, but I believe it has now gone out of fashion, a sort of plumbed indiarubber being at present in favour with the students.

The students were all very fond of Fuseli in

spite of his occasional outbursts of temper, and these outbursts never lasted long. One day some mischief had been done in the school, a cast had been broken or something of that sort. Fuseli in a loud voice said, "I know very well who has done this. He is the one who does all the mischief in the place;" then after a pause, "it is nobody."

At another time, coming into the room suddenly, when some disturbance was going on, he cried out, "You are a pack of wild beasts!" whereupon a student replied, "Yes, sir, and you are our keeper." Fuseli at once laughed, saying, "Why, that is true." A different version of this story has been published in which Fuseli is reported to have exclaimed, "You are a pack of wild beasts and I am the poor devil of a keeper." But the story, as I have given it, is as I heard it from my father, who was, I believe, present when the scene took place, and I have no doubt that it is the more correct version, the point of the little story being the quick recovery of Fuseli's temper on the smart repartee of the student.

According to my father, Fuseli said very little to the students whilst at their work; my father speaks of this as "wise neglect," and remarks that under it Wilkie, Mulready, Etty, Landseer, and Haydon, and he might have added himself and Jackson, distinguished themselves. Fuseli however, was only answerable for the instruction in the Antique School, and it is highly probable that these distinguished men received much sound



advice and many valuable hints from the monthly Visitors in the Life Classes.

The students' drawings in my father's days varied considerably from those which were done in 1853, when I was in the Schools. The fashion in my time was to work the drawing up, with the stump or point to a high finish ; our drawings were executed on white paper, the outline sharply defined with a distinct edge, the white paper forming the background throughout. I have seen the drawing from the antique for which my father obtained a silver medal ; it was drawn delicately in Italian chalk on grey tinted paper, the lights being brightened with white chalk. It also had a background varying in depth of tone in different parts. This was the usual style in the Schools during Fuseli's Keepership. I am inclined to think it was a better style for the students than that in vogue in my time. By my father's advice I always worked a background to my Academy studies ; I was told by the Keeper and by some of the Visitors that it was wasting time to do this, but I believe a student should from the very first study the variations of relief which surround the object before him. My son tells me that Sir Hubert von Herkomer in his school at Bushey always insisted on the students putting backgrounds to their figure studies, and that he advocated the use of charcoal instead of chalk ; here I think he was right, for, of all the materials an artist uses, not one responds so sympathetically and spontaneously to the thought as charcoal. The drawback to charcoal is the very slight hold it has of the paper,

the least touch effacing it ; but as studies done in a school are only made for practice it does not matter very much whether they get rubbed or not ; and if they are intended for medal competition, they can, to a certain extent, be set.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

FROM the early catalogues of the Royal Academy we learn the number and names of the rooms allotted to it in Somerset House. They are called, the Great Room, the Inner Room, the Ante-Room, and the Antique Academy. These four rooms were, during the annual Exhibitions, devoted entirely to oil paintings, between seven and eight hundred works being accommodated on their walls.

The remaining rooms were, the Library, in which water - colour drawings and designs in architecture were exhibited, the Model Academy, used for the display of Sculpture, and the Council Room, in which were placed the diploma works. All these rooms were in a block on the righthand side of the main entrance from the Strand.

The founders of the Academy evidently regarded this Royal Grant of rooms as a permanency, for on entering into possession they at once proceeded to decorate the ceilings and walls with allegorical designs, the President

himself, Angelica Kauffman, and, I believe, West, being among those who executed them. These decorative works being painted on large canvases, let into the walls like panels, were taken down when, in 1836, the Academy was moved to Trafalgar Square, and some of them are still to be seen in Burlington House.

There is, in the possession of the Academy an oil painting by Zoffany, representing the large room, called the Antique Academy, in which the students are depicted at work drawing from casts of well-known antique figures; the lighting is effected by oil lamps with reflectors.

The Inner Room, or, as it is sometimes called, the Little Room, was used for the Painting School. I think the Life Class must have been in the Anteroom, modelling being no doubt carried on in the Sculpture Room.

A handsome staircase led up to the Exhibition Rooms, and on each side of this stood some casts of celebrated antique figures, among which the colossal cast of the Farnese Hercules was very conspicuous. In the building in Trafalgar Square the Hercules again appeared at the foot of the staircase, where it was a very familiar object to all the students in my time. On the removal to Burlington House it no longer maintained its prominent position, but, descending to Hades, it now reposes in the dark crypt at the back of the school-rooms.

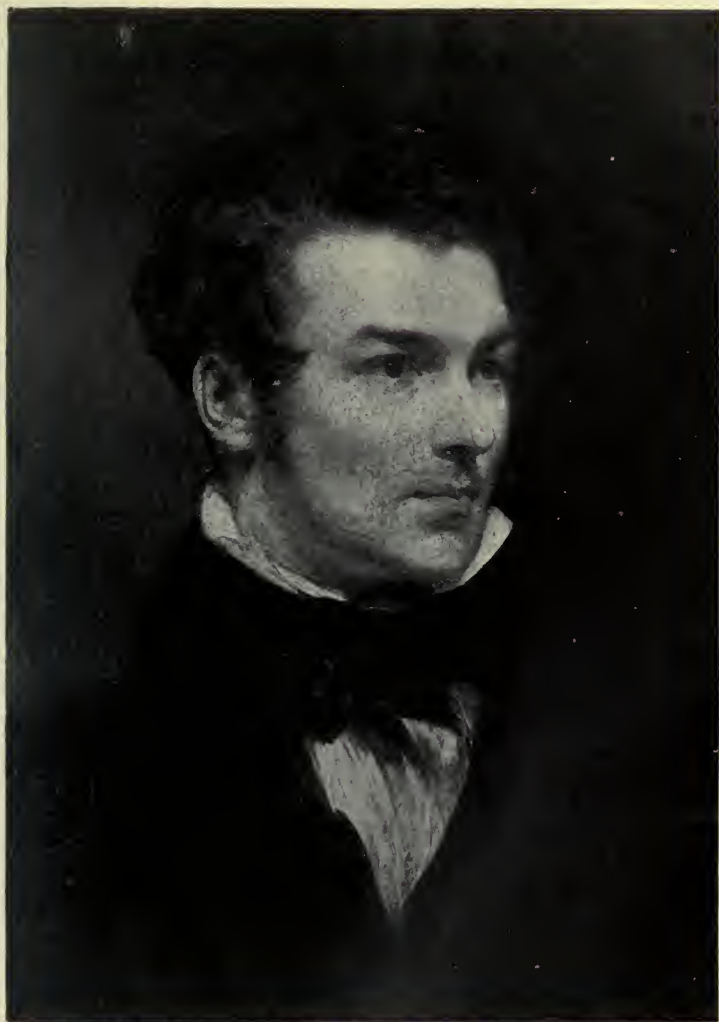
Of the arrangement, lighting, and general aspect of the rooms in Somerset House that

were allotted to the students, I obtained very little information from my father, and even of his fellow students I can only remember his having spoken of one or two; Joseph Severn, however, who obtained the gold medal in 1819, was one of these. During his studentship, my father made a very beautiful little water-colour study of Severn's head in profile. I remember this drawing well; the features were most remarkable for their regularity and refinement.

On leaving the Academy Joseph Severn went to Italy, where he resided for the greater part of his after life. He became the great friend of Keats, and was with him when he died. My father said that Severn was regarded by his fellow students as a marvellous genius, certain of becoming one of the leading painters of his age, but for some reason or other he did very little to distinguish himself in art after he went to Italy.

Sir Edwin Landseer, also a fellow student of my father's, entered the Schools in 1816 when only fourteen years old. Fuseli took much notice of him, calling him "his little dog boy," for he drew dogs well even at that age. My father described him as a pretty little boy with very curly fair hair. He got him to sit for the figure of the little prince in his picture of the "Death of Rutland," now in America.

My father was strongly in favour of the system of teaching by means of visitors which had been adopted by the Academy at its origin; he esteemed very highly the privilege that he



C. R. LESLIE, R.A.  
*From a portrait by himself, 1820.*

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as a young student had by this means received from the teaching and advice given him by such men as Flaxman, Stothard, Lawrence, Beechey, and others. He spoke affectionately of the kind interest that the venerable President West took in the welfare and progress of the students. West's studio was at all times open to any young artists who came to him; he would give them advice on the works they brought to show him, and would help them by every means in his power. West was a very old man when my father knew him, dying in 1820 just as my father would be completing the last year of his studentship. The two silver medals which my father obtained were presented to him by the hands of the Keeper, the President himself being too infirm to fulfil the task.

In the early days of the Academy the lectures on Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture were more popular with the students than they were in my time, and many of the members themselves attended these lectures. I recollect a number of old rush-bottomed chairs which used to be placed on lecture nights in front of the students' seats, for the exclusive use of members. On the backs of some of these chairs were painted the words "The President," "The Keeper," "The Secretary," "The Treasurer"; but in my time I hardly ever saw any of the officials seated on them except the Keeper. The attendance of the students at the lectures must have fallen off gradually, for some years before I entered the Schools a law was passed rendering attendance

at three entire courses of lectures compulsory on all students in the Antique School before they could obtain admission to the Life Class.

Compulsory audiences are not always attentive, and the greater part of the students in my time passed the weary hour in sketching likenesses of one another or of the lecturer himself, who, no doubt, imagined that they were industriously employed in taking notes of his discourse. I remember during old Sir Richard Westmacott's lectures the signal for applause was given whenever he stopped to drink water; sometimes, however, something he said raised a really genuine though faint sound of applause, whereupon the dear old man instantly took water from sheer force of habit.

Formerly, lectures were delivered on perspective, the lecturer being termed Professor of Perspective; in 1860 this Professorship was abolished, lessons of a practical nature being given to the students in class, by one of the members if possible, or if not by an outside expert, who is termed Teacher of Perspective.

For a little over thirty years the Professorship of Perspective was held by no less a personage than J. M. W. Turner, who succeeded a certain Edward Edwards, an Associate, in 1806. My father attended the lectures given by Turner, not so much for the purpose of learning anything about perspective, as on account of the beautiful drawings which Turner exhibited as examples of the science. Of the lectures themselves scarcely a word could be heard, Turner's delivery being

little better than an incoherent and mysterious mumble. I never heard what became of these drawings of Turner's—my father described them as masterly compositions chiefly of architectural subjects, many having beautiful aerial effects in them of a visionary character.

After Turner's resignation of the Professorship in 1837 no Academician seems to have thought it worth his while to fill the chair, which remained vacant for two years, when another Associate was elected Professor, J. P. Knight by name, a distinguished portrait painter, who afterwards, in 1847, became Secretary.

Though still called Professor, Knight did not lecture in the ordinary sense of the word, but gave a series of practical lessons during the winter evenings to classes of between thirty or forty students. He executed a drawing himself as an example, the students crowding round on all sides; they then took their seats at long tables and made drawings from the example set, Knight afterwards going round inspecting and correcting their work. These lessons were given in what was called the North Room in the building in Trafalgar Square; it was not a very large room, and a few extra students were accommodated in the adjoining West Room.

Knight was a good-natured and indulgent master; his knowledge of perspective was very thorough, and he had the art of explaining things in a lucid manner; but he was not a good disciplinarian, and I am sorry to say we frequently



took advantage of his amiability by indulging in all sorts of noise and practical jokes. His drawing board was in the North Room, and when he wished the class to assemble round it, he gave a tapping on it, with his ruler; this weapon he called his bell, and occasionally when he was away attending to the students in the West Room, some student would tap with his ruler exactly in Knight's manner, upon which the whole class, including those in the West Room with Mr Knight himself, would come rushing up to the Professor's empty chair. On occasions of this sort we generally received a mild reproof, as, of course, it would have been quite impossible to attempt to discover the culprit.

Once, however, a practical joke of a more serious character took place which led to considerable trouble. These perspective lessons were held in the evening from six to eight. Knight was Secretary at the time, and when there happened to be a Council meeting on one of these evenings, Knight would leave us at a quarter to eight in order to get the necessary books and papers ready for the Council-table. The members of the Council usually have tea or coffee served in an anteroom before commencing their business at eight o'clock; on these occasions, to save time, a tray with Mr Knight's tea was brought up for him to the class-room. Of course, though we were left thus for the supposed purpose of finishing our work, hardly any of us ever did so, but packing up our things went off at once. But one evening, after Mr Knight had so left us,

when we started to be off, we found the door locked on the outside. There was a bell in the room and some of the students began to ring this. The porter, known to us as "little red-headed Bob," answered the bell, but he could do nothing as the keys were not in the door. As a matter of fact one of the students had departed, locked the door after him, and thrown the bunch of keys, as he left, behind the colossal cast of the Hercules which stood at the foot of the staircase. The imprisoned students continued ringing violently and incessantly. At length the ringing was heard in the Council Room below, and Mr Knight himself came up, but having no key he, too, was quite helpless. Charles Landseer, who was Keeper at the time, was away, but eventually his bunch of duplicate keys was found, and we at last were liberated. Mr Knight was, of course, very much put out about the affair, threatening to withhold the certificates of attendance from the whole class, unless the culprit came forward. The student eventually owned up and saved himself the disgrace of being expelled by voluntarily resigning his studentship, and I have never seen or heard of him since.

For myself I may say that I derived very little advantage from the forty lessons I had in Mr Knight's class, chiefly because they all depended on measurement. My father gave me a few simple lessons in perspective before I entered the Academy Schools, and I have found them quite sufficient for all purposes ever since. I do not think a painter should ever become a slave to rules



of any sort ; he should know the rules and principles, but should feel at liberty to discard them at any time if by so doing the composition of his work would in his own opinion gain in force or effect. Turner, who understood perspective extremely well, frequently broke the rules, even at times having two points of sight in the same picture, but his pictures always *looked right*, even if the perspective in them was theoretically faulty. I have often noticed that when an artist, on commencing a picture, has the perspective carefully worked out for him by an expert, the result is most unsatisfactory, the perspective looking wrong somehow, though it may be quite correct theoretically ; whereas if an artist has a correct eye and natural feeling for the perspective that objects present to him, he has little occasion for troubling about rules. Sir William Orchardson had hardly any scientific knowledge of perspective, but his floors always look as if you could walk on them, his chairs as if you could sit on them, and his tables as if you could eat off them. He possessed a marvellously correct eye ; he saw things rightly, and he painted them so.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

FUSELI was succeeded in the Keepership by a member named Thompson ; he was a historical painter, but of the man and his works very little is known. He only held the office for two years, resigning the post on account of his health. He seems to have retired from his profession as a painter as well, for though he lived until 1843 he but very seldom practised his art.

William Hilton succeeded Thompson in 1827, and occupied the post until 1839. As a painter his early works were of the severe, classical, dry, and conventional style which characterised historical art during the Presidency of West and the Keepership of Fuseli. Hilton's pictures, however, gradually became more florid in style, with a slight tendency to mediævalism, such as was beginning at that time to find favour both with painters and architects. His art may be classed as something between that of West and the Westminster cartoons.

Hilton's pictures met with very few purchasers, patronage for any works of art excepting portraits, being in those days almost as scanty as it is at

the present time. My father told me that it was chiefly the indignation which Sir Francis Chantrey felt at seeing so many of his friend Hilton's pictures remain year after year unsold that determined him to make his celebrated will. Hilton was very popular with the students. They presented him with a valuable piece of plate as a token of their regard; they also purchased after his death, and presented to the National Gallery, his spirited picture of "Sir Calepine rescuing Serena."

On Hilton's death in 1839, George Jones was elected Keeper; he held the office for ten years, resigning in 1850. He was but an indifferent artist, painting chiefly battle pieces. As a young man he served in the militia, and during the Peninsular War, being a Captain in the Montgomery Militia, he volunteered with his company to the fourth divisional battalion under Lord Dartmouth, and subsequently served with the force under Wellington, and formed part of the army of occupation in Paris in 1815.

This early military training, no doubt, helped Jones when he became Keeper in maintaining strict discipline in the Schools. He was popular with the students and did all he could to imbue them with a sense of the dignity of their position. He also received a piece of plate on his retirement from office, as had Fuseli and Hilton before him.

On account of Sir Martin Shee's bad health Jones had frequently to take the President's chair, and it was pretty well known amongst his brother members that he imagined himself as a likely



candidate for the Presidential Chair on the occasion of Sir Martin's death. He did indeed receive two votes, but there can be no doubt that the Academicians acted wisely in electing the scholarly and courteous Eastlake.

Jones lived after his retirement until 1869, and though he seldom attended the meetings of the General Assembly he was fond of dropping into the School to see how things were getting on; I well remember seeing him there when I was a student.

Jones cultivated a military appearance all his life; he had at one time received some foreign order, and he always wore the red ribbon of this order round his neck at private views and on festive occasions. He bore considerable resemblance to the great Duke himself, and had now and then been mistaken for him; when the Duke was told of this he is reported to have said, "That is very odd, for I have never been taken for Mr Jones."

Some celebrated painters passed through the Schools during Jones's Keepership, among others Sir John Millais, J. C. Hook, and Holman Hunt. Millais and Hook each obtained the Gold Medal, the former in 1847, the latter in 1845.

Millais was only eleven years old when he entered the Academy Schools; it is reported of him that, on the occasion of his obtaining his first silver medal, the students lifted him up and passed him over their heads, like a child, on his way to receive it from the President. My eldest brother, Robert, was a student for a



short time whilst Millais was in the Schools, and he described him as a fair curly-headed boy, dressed in the peculiar little skirted frock coat and trousers worn by boys of fourteen in the first years of Queen Victoria's reign, a costume which is well shown in the illustrations to the boyish diary of Richard Doyle, "Dick" always representing himself as thus clothed.

In 1850 Charles Landseer succeeded Jones as Keeper and held office until 1873. He was, when young, a pupil of Haydon, with whom he studied anatomy, even at times going in for dissection, and my father said it was partly on this account that he was elected to the Keepership, but I suspect the electors were also a good deal influenced by their desire to please his more celebrated brother Sir Edwin, whose influence in the Academy was at its zenith at that time.

Charles Landseer was slightly deaf, very good-natured, and an inveterate punster. He had not anything like the ability of Jones in maintaining discipline amongst the students, and it was during his reign that curators were first appointed to keep order in the Schools; they had to be present during the whole of the time the students were at work in them.

In the Antique School, during the first years of Landseer's Keepership, the students were rather a disorderly lot, boyish pranks of all kinds being freely indulged in. Charles Landseer had a peculiarly loud staccato voice, which one of the students could imitate to perfection; it was

impossible, when hearing this imitation, not to believe that Landseer himself was in the room. One day Landseer came in suddenly whilst the imitation was still going on, and for a short time the Keeper's voice was heard in two places at the same time.

There was no occasion for curators in the Life Class at that time as, by the laws, the Visitors had to remain in the room throughout the whole of the sittings. Some brought books to read to fill up their spare time, others would make sketches of the model themselves; my father usually did so. Etty, whether he was Visitor or not, would come to the Life School, would seat himself beside the students and paint from the model. At one time his brother members remonstrated with him on this habit, but he threatened to resign rather than give it up, and during all the years of his membership he hardly ever missed an evening in the Life Class. Etty died before my student days, but his style of painting from the nude still considerably influenced the students' work. Millais and Hook, I feel sure, owed much of their taste in colour to Etty, beside whom they must have often sat working.

I cannot say that I received much benefit from the few corrective remarks which Charles Landseer made on his daily rounds in the Antique School, though I learnt a good many things from my fellow students. But from the Visitors in the Life Class I received many most useful words of reproof and encouragement which kept their place in my mind for long afterwards. For

Mr Dyce and Mr Cope I felt great respect, for the interest they took in benefiting the students by their advice was evidently genuine and sincere.

I remember that while Mr Dyce was Visitor for the month during which we were making our drawings in competition for the silver medal, the model, old Christie, failed one evening to make his appearance. Mr Dyce waited for nearly half an hour, at the end of which Christie at last came, but so totally drunk that he had to be turned away. Mr Dyce told us that we might stay on, and work at our drawings if we liked, though he did not recommend us to do so, and then took his departure. In a very few moments pandemonium not unnaturally set in; the students began by pelting one another with pellets of modelling clay, which rendered work absolutely impossible. From this they proceeded to a game of cricket. There was an old bat among the school properties, which had been used by some visitor for a pose; a ball was made by rolling up a lump of modelling clay, and a wicket was put up on the throne. No fielding was required as the ball, when hit, invariably stuck to the bat from which it was picked off, rolled up, and returned to the bowler.

The fun became fast and furious, ending in a sort of dramatic performance, the students dressing up in any odds and ends they could find in the property box. I remember in particular one student, who dressed himself up as a housemaid, with a broom, a dust pan, and a pail of water; the water was spilt all about the throne,



the chalk marks, on which Christie's feet ought to have been, were entirely obliterated. When the performance was in full swing, little Bob the porter suddenly entered and proceeded at once to take our names down, whereupon one of the students promptly turned out the gas and we, scrambling over the porter and one another, made our escape.

The next evening on my arrival I found Mr Dyce sitting looking rather grim, old Christie standing in his pose, and the students very silent. Mr Dyce, who knew me personally, asked if I had been present the night before, to which I, of course, replied in the affirmative. He seemed dreadfully put out, remarking that we were a wretched set of boobies, that could not be trusted, that he should report us to the Council, and that probably the medal would be withheld.

But Mr Dyce was a gentleman, and the next evening he made a little speech to the students, saying that he was sorry for what he had said the evening before, for on thinking the matter over he felt that it was his own fault for having left us (his duty as Visitor being to remain in the room whilst the students were at work), and that either he should have stayed with us or else at once sent us away. We all liked Mr Dyce; he was one of the best Visitors I was ever under. He had a remarkably correct eye for drawing and possessed an intimate knowledge of the technique of painting, about which he liked to talk to any of the students who took interest in the matter. Dyce was one of the first of the Academicians to



appreciate the sincerity of the Pre-Raphaelites in their endeavour to set art free from commonplace conventionalities and to revive the study of truth and nature.

The Visitors in my time were elected from the Royal Academicians only, but very shortly afterwards a law was passed which rendered Associates equally eligible for the post. This was no doubt a great improvement, for not only are younger men often better able to teach than elder, but there was often difficulty in persuading many of the most distinguished amongst the full members to take up the work; some declined on account of ill health, and others because they were too much occupied in their own studios.

The increased number which the new law gave of persons willing to serve, insured always a good supply of competent teachers in the schools; in this respect the students are better off now in the matter of visitors than in my school days. We used frequently to have very old members placed over us, amongst others I remember Abraham Cooper, nicknamed "Horse Cooper" to distinguish him from Sidney Cooper who was called "Cow Cooper"; Baily, the sculptor, was likewise a frequent Visitor. Cooper and Baily, one born in 1787 and the other in 1788, were both elected Associates in 1817. Baily became a student in 1809. Cooper never was a student, for he had failed to pass the necessary tests for admission as a Probationer in 1817, the very same year in which he was elected as an Associate. It was rather curious because, as an

Associate, he could enter any of the Schools and work in them as much as he liked. Cooper distinguished himself when young by very spirited little battle-pieces, in which a black and a white horse generally produced the leading effect.

From old men such as these we derived little or no benefit in our studies, though they kept order very well and generally set the models in very good poses, possibly poses which they remembered as given by Flaxman or Stothard to the immortal Sam Strowger when they themselves were students.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

THE buildings in Trafalgar Square have undergone so many important alterations since the Academy removed from them, that it is now very difficult to trace which were the actual rooms occupied by the Academy. The Sculpture Room, used for the Antique School and at some times of the year in the evenings for the School of Drawing from the life, has entirely disappeared.

It was on a level with the entrance, where the turnstiles now are, but quite at the back of the old building. It made a very inadequate room for the exhibition of sculpture, but was by no means a bad one for the students to work in. It had a double row of seats in the form of a semi-circle, the casts being placed in the centre at the back, opposite the high lights which faced the barrack yard behind the building. In the summer drawing and painting from the life was carried on in the dome on the roof, and a very good light was obtained up there. I served my first Visitorship in this dome, the first year after my election as an Associate.

The Painting School, for painting from the

draped model and for copying works of the Old Masters, was held in the West Room, the first of the large rooms, used for the exhibition of paintings, as you ascended the staircase. On each side of the staircase were two small oblong rooms, called respectively the North and South Rooms, used during the exhibition, the one for water-colour drawings, and the other for miniatures and architectural drawings. At the last three or four exhibitions that were held in the buildings in Trafalgar Square the North Room was hung entirely with oil pictures, and it was in this room that Walker's pictures of "The Bathers" and Whistler's first exhibited picture, "At the Piano," were hung.

The students' entrance to the Schools was in a passage-way which led through the building to the barracks at the back, the students' door being on the left. A door on the other side led into the council-room and the library.

The Keeper's apartments were beyond these rooms with a private entrance facing St Martin's Church. The two passage-ways through the building were made at the desire of the Duke of Wellington, to allow the soldiers a free entry on to Trafalgar Square in case of serious riots; they have been since closed and the barracks done away with. This always seems to me a pity, as the Square is in a very important strategical point in case of street fighting; the Duke knew this and foresaw the great advantage of being able to occupy the entire upper part of the square with soldiers in five minutes.



The students' entrance door led into a large and rather dimly lighted vestibule in the basement. Close to the door on the right was a small room for the porters; at the back of the vestibule, also on the right, was a small room for the clerk. The clerk in my time was a very old man named Vaughan, a portrait of whom by Knight hangs in the present council-room at Burlington House. On the left there was a back staircase leading up to the public entrance; half-way up this was a small room, where the students used to wash their brushes, and from the window of this a good view of the square was obtained. The walls and window shutters of this place were scribbled all over with drawings and caricatures of every description. I remember one in particular, a very accurate representation of old Northumberland House. From the window of this room I saw the Guards march out through the passage-way from the barracks, on their way to the Crimea, the band playing "The Girl I left behind me" and a large crowd cheering them.

The vestibule on the basement was a dark and gloomy place, every available corner being occupied by dusty casts from the antique. On one occasion several rounds of a fight took place here, between a sculptor and a painter, before the porters could interfere. And here it was that old Mr Pickersgill, the Librarian, one night fell, cutting his bald head badly against the pedestal of one of the casts.

Mr Pickersgill in spite of ejaculating that he was a dead man, recovered; he was safely con-

veyed home in a cab, one of the students who lived in his direction accompanying him.

Quite a large number of those who were my contemporaries as students afterwards distinguished themselves ; amongst others I may mention H. S. Marks, H. W. B. Davis, P. Morris, G. A. Storey, H. Moore, S. Solomon, J. C. Clark, and J. Brett, whom we used to call "Miss Brett," because, to keep his hands clean, he worked in kid gloves. Sir William Richmond and Albert Moore came into the Antique School just as I entered the Life Class. Sir Edward Poynter also entered the Schools in 1855, but he remained in them, I believe, only for a short time. What became of most of the others, many of them very pleasant fellows, I cannot say ; one, I know, took holy orders, one became a stockbroker, and one a market gardener, for I met all these in after life, but of the rest I know nothing. Sir John Millais used to tell an amusing story of a meeting he had with an old fellow student of his, nearly thirty years after they had last seen one another. Sir John kindly enquired how he was getting on. "Oh," said the other, "I have been doing very well with portraits and that sort of thing," adding, "Do you still follow the Arts?" Such is fame!

The lectures were delivered in the large East Room. My father was Professor of Painting from 1847 to 1852. His lectures were always very well attended, not only by the students but by great numbers of the members and their friends. Apart

from their own intrinsic merit as vehicles for instruction, he made them very attractive by covering the wall behind him with fine examples of the Old Masters, the beauties of which he would point out and explain. He used to obtain the loan of these works from their owners. The labour and care he bestowed on these lectures considerably injured his health, and he resigned the professorship in 1852. The lectures themselves were afterwards published under the title of "A Handbook for young Painters," a work which has retained its popularity, a re-issue of it having been published quite recently.

There were few lectures in my time more popular with the students than those on Anatomy, delivered by Professor Partridge. His brother, John Partridge, was an artist of considerable ability; he was a member of a "Sketching Club," other members of which were Stanfield, Alfred and John Chalon, Cristall, Bone, Uwins, and my father. Mr Bernard Partridge, the talented cartoonist of *Punch*, is Professor Partridge's son.

The scene on the occasion of one of Professor Partridge's lectures was very droll. The lecturer in his Professor's gown stood on a broad platform, with a long bamboo pointing-stick in his hand; the wall behind was hung all over with gruesome anatomical diagrams. At one end of the platform sat Westall, the model, entirely nude, and at the other, seated in a chair with his arms folded, was the Professor's attendant, stolid and imperturbable, the one note of repose in the scene, save for the Academy skeleton swinging from a ring in its



skull to a kind of gallows. The Professor walked up and down, and from time to time Westall would strike attitudes to show the various muscles in action.

Through Professor Partridge's kindness, those of the students who chose, were admitted very early in the morning to the theatre at King's College Hospital, where he had placed dissections of the human body for us to draw from. During one winter term, Mr Storey and I went there every morning at eight o'clock for an hour's work : I do not know whether it was of any great use to us in our profession, but it was very interesting, and I picked up a lot of knowledge about the human body which I could not otherwise have acquired.

Beside me, when I was a probationer, sat a certain "Mike" Halliday, and one morning, whilst we were at work, sudden excitement filled the room at seeing the great leader of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood himself enter and pass along to Halliday, who was an intimate friend of his, and give him some friendly advice about his drawing. When afterwards he turned and shook hands with me I felt indeed proud. He knew my father very well in those days, and I had had the privilege of calling on him in Gower Street, to see his pictures of "The Huguenot" and "Ophelia."

Sir John Millais was all his life remarkable for the kindness and sympathy which he showed to young artists. The utter absence of vanity or affectation and the genuine naturalness and sincerity of his conversation won the hearts of every one who knew him. On that day he went



all round the school, evidently interested in all the old well-remembered casts, boxes, easels, and other paraphernalia, which remained just as they had been when he himself was a student. This visit of Millais came back forcibly to me years afterwards on the occasion of his delivering his last speech at the Academy, in which he spoke of his great love for the institution. "I love everything belonging to it—the casts I have drawn from as a boy, the books I have consulted in the Library, the very benches I have sat on—I love them all. . . ."

I never had the luck to work under Millais when he was teaching in the Schools, but I feel certain he must have been by far the best Visitor the Royal Academy ever had. I never knew any one so able to tell you at once what was wrong with your work, or one who did so in such a winning, straightforward manner. The advantage which the Academy student has in being under the teaching of the most celebrated artist his country possesses, even though it be but for a month, is very great. The following extract from a letter of Constable to my father fills one with envy of the fortunate students who were in the Schools in 1831.

"I set my first figure yesterday, and it is much liked; Etty congratulated me upon it; do, dear Leslie, come and see it. I have dressed up a bower of laurel, and I told the students they probably expected a landscape background from me. I am quite popular in the Life; at all events I spare neither pains nor expense to become a

good Academician. My garden of Eden cost me ten shillings, and my men were twice stopped coming from Hampstead with the green boughs, by the police, who thought (as was the case) they had robbed some gentleman's grounds. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

When art teaching is carried on by one man from day to day, month to month, and year to year, even though the master may possess great ability, the monotony of the thing cannot fail to dull the energy and interest which it is so necessary for him to keep up in order to stir the students to enthusiasm. On the other hand, it is both refreshing and very instructive to an artist of experience occasionally to spend a month in helping, in any way that he thinks possible, young students in their work; bestowing, if he is wise, most of his attention on those whose works show marked ability and intelligence.

The "Painting School," in my time, was, as it still is, distinct from the "School of Painting" from the nude life; but it differed in other respects from the Painting School of the present day, chiefly in that students were not obliged to make their studies, from the head, of life size. The models set by the Visitors often wore entire costumes, small studies from the whole figure being allowed and were encouraged. This concession was very popular with the students, for they frequently made quite nice little pictures out of their studies, and often sold these afterwards at some of the minor exhibitions. I sold one such study, of a girl with a pitcher, which

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Constable," C. R. Leslie, p. 204.

I exhibited at the Suffolk Street Gallery, to the Duke of Hamilton for ten guineas. Yet it was a bad practice, for instead of giving their whole thoughts to the faithful rendering of the object before them, students were led away by the wish to make their work attractive and saleable; they were in the habit of putting in pretty backgrounds to their studies, often entirely different in tone to those behind the models in the School.

The Council indeed disapproved of the practice, and shortly after I left the Schools, a law was passed to the effect that studies should be of the head and shoulders of the model only, and that they should be painted life size; and students were forbidden to exhibit any studies that were made in the Schools during their term of studentship.

Formerly, any student who had obtained a medal was permitted to remain in the Schools for the rest of his life. This law was intended by its framers to induce students of ability to remain for a few years working in the Schools after the usual term had expired, or at any rate to return occasionally and work there. The idea was that it would be beneficial to the other students whose standard of excellence would be maintained by the example of the elders. These men were termed "Life Students." This law was still in force in my time, but it was soon afterwards abrogated, as it was found that very few really clever young men availed themselves of the privilege.



I remember two such so-called Life Students. One was a little bald-headed old man, who had worked in the Schools when they were in Somerset House; my father knew him quite well, but he died just before I became a probationer. The other was in the Life Class when I entered it, working only in the Painting School. When I was elected an Associate in 1868 he was still painting in the School; he had become a Life Student before my time, and he worked on for many years after 1868. Mr William de Morgan, who must, I think, have been an Academy student himself, gives in his novel "Alice for Short" a vivid picture of this eccentric figure. The old man was very economical of his canvases; he never, that I remember, bought a new one; scraping off his study the moment the sittings ended, he would turn the canvas upside down and scumbled over it a coat of white paint, in order to begin a fresh study on it. We were, I fear, rather unkind to him, playing off jokes of all sorts and setting booby traps for him.



## CHAPTER V

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

THERE was a French student in my time named Boutellier; he did not distinguish himself much in the Antique Class, but in the Life School he made a remarkably beautiful study which obtained the £10 premium. This £10 premium had just been started, the idea being to buy, from time to time, any drawings of extra good quality, to hang in the Schools as examples of excellence. I did not see this Student again or hear anything of him until 1893, when he called on me in great distress; he said he had pawned almost everything he had, was unable to pay his rent, but that if he could only get out of debt he might be able to get on again, as he had still a market with some dealers for his pictures.

I am always very cautious in my charities, and as I really knew nothing about him at that time, I asked him if he would allow me to have his case investigated by the local agent of the Charity Organisation Society. To this he freely consented, and soon after I received a very satisfactory attestation as to the poor fellow's temper-

ance and good character in general. Thereupon I gave him enough to enable him to pay his rent and hire a model, etc., so that I could get a specimen of his work. He brought me the painting when done and I sent it, together with an application for help, to the Artist's General Benevolent Institution. When I next saw him I was engaged hanging pictures for the exhibition. He called at the Academy to thank me; he had received a donation of £50 from the Institution. He seemed a different man, nicely dressed and radiant in expression; he assured me that he could now go to work again with every hope of success. But, alas! it was not to be; for about three months later, I read one day in the paper the announcement of his death by suicide in the river. From what I knew of the character of the man, I concluded that, elated by his reinstatement, he must have run through his money quickly and foolishly, and that, being too proud to ask for further help, his grief and mortification overcame him.

Of the Architectural students I know very little; they are taught by Visitors, as are the Painting and Sculpture students, and judging by the works they send in for the annual medal competitions, the Royal Academy has good reason to be proud of them. They work in a separate room, altogether apart from the other students, and are seldom seen by them.

In my time the painters and sculptors worked side by side both in the Life and the Antique Schools, from the same models and from the same

casts. I liked this arrangement, and often did a bit of modelling myself. We saw little of the Architectural students except at the annual distribution of prizes on the 10th of December. We painters and sculptors used to think them rather magnificent beings, and perhaps affected, in contrast to them, a Bohemianism of our own.

A great change has come over the ways and manners of the Painting and Sculpture students since the Academy moved into Burlington House. At the present day, on the night of the 10th December, all the students appear, with very few exceptions, in evening dress. This change, with many others in the character and behaviour of the students, is no doubt chiefly due to the invasion of the school by the ladies, which took place towards the end of Charles Landseer's Keepership.

The invasion was artfully planned. In 1860 one female was passed into the establishment by an entirely unsuspecting Council; she had sent in her drawings with her Christian names in initials only. It was a good enough drawing. The laws were searched, nothing was found in them prohibitory to the admission of females, and so she took her place amongst the boys.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Of this lady Mr Briton Riviere, who knew her from his boyhood, gives me the following account:—She was a Miss Laura Herford, an aunt of Mrs Allingham, the celebrated water-colour painter; her action, in thus obtaining her studentship, was an entirely disinterested one, undertaken solely with a view to the advancement of female artists. On the outbreak of cholera in 1870, she with characteristic enthusiasm became a nurse, and shortly afterwards died from an accidental administration of chloroform, taken to relieve internal neuralgia from which she had long been a sufferer.



drawing she made as a probationer was quite good, and in due course she received her ivory ticket with a copy of the laws and took her seat in the School as a Royal Academy student. Two or three more soon followed, and the number of female students kept on increasing until, I believe, at the present time it considerably exceeds that of the males.

The manners, customs, and general character of the male students from that time have gradually (I might almost say entirely) changed. It has changed for the better certainly as regards behaviour; but that there has been somehow a general deterioration in the excellence of the work done in the Schools cannot, I am afraid, be denied. This falling off was, however, not entirely due to the influx of the female element, and indeed it did not make itself first noticeable until the second half of Lord Leighton's presidency. Other causes then must be sought, and among them I may, perhaps, suggest the following.

The liberal patronage that was given to living artists during the 'fifties and 'sixties tempted a vast number of young aspirants to take up art as a profession, many of whom, it must be confessed, might better have been otherwise employed. Again other schools were coming into existence which seemed more attractive than the Academy. There was, further, a growing tendency for young artists to seek, if they could afford it, a more rapid development for their power in the *ateliers* of France and Belgium than could be obtained in the Academy. Sir Hubert von Herkomer's



school at Bushey, which started at that time, attracted and retained a number of young men of great ability who would otherwise have passed through the Academy. The removal to Burlington House from Trafalgar Square certainly gave a lot more elbow room for the students and their teachers, but history has shown that lofty and splendidly appointed studios are by no means the only places in which the highest and best results are attained.

The Schools in Trafalgar Square, crowded and inconvenient as they were, had many advantages over the new and spacious rooms at the back of Burlington House. The situation alone was more lively and inspiring. Trafalgar Square has been called "the finest site in London." The Nelson column, the fountains, King Charles on horseback, the Percy lion with his outstretched tail over old Northumberland House, St Martin's Church with its bells, the barracks at the back, with their soldiers and their bugle calls, and, above all, the National Gallery with its priceless treasures, absolutely next door—all these things formed a most invigorating environment for a young artist. In front of the building on a pad with little wheels, a cripple with no legs who, although he could not possibly be the same that Charles Lamb described as "a fragment of the Elgin marbles," must have succeeded to the practice soon after Lamb's friend, wheeled himself along before our eyes and united us to the London of the past. Nat Langham, the pugilist, kept a public-house at no great

distance, where some of my fellow-students were in the habit of taking lessons in the noble art of boxing.

There was a sort of charm, too, in working in the dome in the roof; we could sometimes get out from it on to the roof itself, the view from which was free and invigorating. Taking it all together there was an air of cheerfulness and busy life about the whole place which seems to me to be entirely lacking in our new abode in Piccadilly.

The Schools at Burlington House in the basement are entirely secluded and remote, away from the bustle and life of the streets. Quiet and well lit as they are, they always seem to me rather depressing in situation; you have to descend a step or two at their very entrance.

The gloomy corridor along the length of the schools rooms, parallel with the dark crypt in which the rejected pictures are stocked, has a dismal effect on my spirits which not even the chatter of the pretty girls in their white pinafores can dispel. Whether or no the character of the place has any influence on the spirits of the students I cannot say; they always seem cheerful enough when I visit there, but surely not quite so lively as the boys I remember in Trafalgar Square.

The Schools in the new building are partly beneath the exhibition rooms numbered 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, the other part extending beyond into the open space at the back of the main building. They are very well lit by high windows and sky-

lights, which admit a north light, so as to avoid sunshine, though in the early mornings and evenings in summer time the sun is occasionally troublesome. The Antique School is at the east end, the Painting Schools for male and female students are in the centre, and the School for Drawing from the life is at the west end. When the Academy first entered into possession of the place, the students' entrance was at the east end, but it was afterwards altered, and is now at the west end, opening into the narrow roadway down which the pictures arrive for the exhibition. The doorway for the admission of pictures and sculpture is immediately beyond the student's entrance; and, when the vans bring the works for the exhibition, a number of the students, during the rests of the models, may be seen there, enjoying a very private view of the pictures as they are being taken in. There is a way from the students' corridor leading through the condemned cells to the front entrance of the Academy, but it is closed to the students by an iron barred gate which is always locked. There is a back staircase, at the west end of the corridor for the students to pass up to the library and the lecture room.

The Architectural School is in a large room at the east end of the block. There are also a few other small rooms including one at the entrance for the porter. What is termed the annexe, runs along at the back of the classrooms; it is divided into several studios, not so lofty as the larger rooms, but well lit and



convenient. Preliminary classes and overflow classes are held in these rooms; sculpture is also carried on in some of them. I like going into this annexe when I am Visitor, for it always appears to me brighter and more cheerful than the larger rooms. Except in the Antique and Preliminary Schools the girls and the boys work in separate rooms, an arrangement of which I quite approve, especially in the case of the boys, who certainly work better thus. They take off their coats and work in their shirt sleeves, on account of the heat from the pipes, and in a freer and easier manner than they do in the mixed classes.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

THE girls, it must be confessed, work very hard and well; numbers of them have taken medals over the heads of the boys, especially in later years. They are more attentive to the teaching of the Visitors than the generality of the boys, though, for the most part, they lack the self-reliant conceit which so often characterises the brightest geniuses of the male sex. Constable used to say that if you robbed an artist of his conceit you might as well hang him at once. It is, however, this self-appreciative tendency on the part of the boys which renders the Visitor's task far more difficult with them than with the docile and diligent girls. Mr Calderon, when Keeper, told me of one young male student who gave him much trouble by his insubordination, and there was another who, for a time, was actually suspended for unruly behaviour; both these students, I am glad to say, have since greatly distinguished themselves.

It is very pleasant work teaching girls, especially

pretty ones, who somehow always seemed to me to make the best studies. Possibly I may have been biassed in their favour, for all my life I have regarded good-looking girls with feelings of gratitude; but it is certainly remarkable that, as a general rule, the prettier the girl the better the study. Girls are very receptive of careful coaching, and it may be that a pretty girl, as she passes through her art training, when the teachers are men, receives decidedly more attention than falls to the lot of her plainer companions; it is not quite fair, but I am afraid it is inevitable.

When female students first found their way into the Academy Schools there were amongst them some who were well advanced in years—veterans, so to speak; they did their best and were most painstaking and diligent, but somehow or other they were not successes. For what particular reason I do not remember, let us hope it was a good one, and uninfluenced by any partiality on the part of the members, an age limit was fixed for the admission of all students, and very shortly after this the elderly female student disappeared from the Academy Schools. It was rather cruel, but I believe the Institution benefited by it.

Amongst other difficulties that a Visitor has to encounter during his month's work in the Schools, is a sort of heckling to which he is subjected from some of the students at the commencement of each sitting; one of the most frequent questions put to him being, "What do

you consider the best way to begin a painting?" For myself, as I have been experimenting all my life, never having commenced any two pictures exactly in the same way, this is a difficult question to answer. I generally get out of it by saying frankly that I have never been able to make up my mind on the subject, but that I think the best plan is, to put on the canvas, in any way the student likes, and as quickly as possible, some resemblance of the model. Sometimes the question is, "What colour do you use, sir, for the shadows?" in which case, "Shadow colour" is a short and obvious reply. Then there are the deaf and dumb students; there are generally one or two of these to be encountered by the Visitor on making his round. On approaching one of these unfortunates, signs are made on the fingers, and pieces of paper with pencils are produced on both sides.

I have no means of ascertaining with what feelings the male students regard the subject of mixed classes at the present day. I suppose that they have grown accustomed to the state of affairs, but I am glad that the female invasion took place after I had left the Schools, for I feel sure that my work in them would have suffered many interruptions if half of my fellow students had been young ladies.

Charles Landseer retired from the Keepership in 1873; he lived six years after his retirement, dying in 1879. He was succeeded by Frederick Robert Pickersgill, who very soon became extremely popular with all the students by his quiet and



amiable manners. His popularity was marked by the genuineness and heartiness of the applause with which he was specially greeted by the students at his entry on the annual occasions when the prizes were distributed. He was firm in maintaining discipline, courteous and conciliatory in his manner, and, I believe, loved the students as much as they did him. It was fortunate, I think, for the Academy to have had a Keeper of so much tact and ability just at the time when the female element began to take root in the Schools, for the ladies made under his amiable and careful management a very propitious start. Pickersgill almost entirely gave up painting after he became Keeper, devoting nearly all his time and energy to the welfare of the Schools. He retired from the Keepership in 1887, living for the last thirteen years of his life at Yarmouth in the Isle of Wight. He was always very fond of the sea and of boating, and had much of the charm of a sailor both in his looks and manner.

On the first occasion that I served on the Council, in 1877, Sir Francis Grant was too ill to take the chair at the selection of pictures for the exhibition, and Pickersgill, as Keeper, fulfilled the President's duty for him. I can truly say that I never served on any selecting committee whose business was conducted with less friction and loss of temper, and this was chiefly owing to the courteous manners and great tact of the Keeper.

Philip Hermogenes Calderon, who was elected an Associate on the same evening as Lord Leighton,



in the year 1864, and a Royal Academician in 1867, succeeded Pickersgill as Keeper in 1887. He was born at Bordeaux in 1833, his father being a Spaniard and his mother a Frenchwoman. He came to England when quite young,\* but retained to the end of his life many indications of his foreign extraction. Extremely shrewd and witty, and possessing an extraordinary amount of common-sense, he was very popular with his brother members, and he served the Academy on its Councils and General Assemblies with the utmost loyalty and ability. With his handsome appearance and slightly foreign air he made altogether a first-rate second officer to his President, the illustrious Lord Leighton.

As regards his management of the Schools I am inclined to think that he was rather a martinet. He held strong views about how things ought to be done, and his ready wit and occasional sarcasm gave at times rather a sharp edge to his critical remarks. It was on this account that his associates in St John's Wood, though all were very fond of the man, gave him the nickname of "the Fiend."

Lord Leighton, whose own training had been purely German, was extremely cosmopolitan in all his views on art. As a Visitor he was most indefatigable, attending every day during his month's duty, and remaining with the students during the whole time that the models were sitting. His influence on the students was great; the perspicuity of his remarks was marvellous. He had a reason and a purpose for every touch

he gave to his own works, and he demanded the same from the students in their work. He abhorred all flaking and tentative work, ignoring, perhaps too much, the predilections or inspirations which a student might himself feel.

Throughout Sir Francis Grant's Presidency and for several years after Lord Leighton's accession to the Chair, the predominating influence that the Pre-Raphaelite movement had over the work done in our Schools was plainly manifest. That it was an influence for good I firmly believe, for it promoted accurate and painstaking work and absolute fidelity to nature, "the Old Mistress," as Millais used to call her in contradistinction to "the Old Masters," but, above all, the movement was entirely a national one, a purely native product, without a trace of any foreign element. It flourished famously in its native land, but nowhere else, and under its influence the Academy Schools certainly produced a large percentage of students who in after life greatly distinguished themselves.

A great change, however, was at hand, and new influences were about to bear their fruit. Under such a President as Leighton and such a Keeper as Calderon, it is not surprising that the work of the students soon lost much of its British characteristics, and that distinctly foreign ideals began to influence their works. Whether or no our Schools benefited by this change is a matter of opinion, and I have myself great doubts on the subject; that there was a distinct falling off in the quality of the work done in them at that time

can hardly be denied, and most certainly the number of our male students began seriously to decline. Because foreign methods seemed so desirable, the young aspirants to fame naturally considered that they would do better to seek their training direct in the *ateliers* of Paris or Antwerp, and as a matter of fact great numbers did so. This diminution in the number of male students was a loss for which the increased influx of females by no means compensated. In the meantime the students were having, as regards other matters than art, a good time of it in Burlington House. The young gentlemen and ladies got on very well together; students' clubs were formed, cricket matches were held (but elsewhere than in the class-rooms), mixed teams at hockey and lawn - tennis became fashionable, and they even got as far as dances and fancy balls.

There were a lot of pickings to be got out of the place; the number and value of the prizes and scholarships increased enormously. A travelling scholarship of £200 a year was now given with every gold medal, instead of with every other one as formerly. Then there were the Turner and the Creswick prizes for landscape, the Armytage prize for a sketching competition, the Landseer scholarships, prizes for decorative designs and drapery studies, as well as all the old medals and prizes for drawings, paintings, and work from the life and the antique.

The distribution of these prizes, on the night of the 10th of December, when Lord Leighton



delivered one of his eloquent discourses to the students, was a most brilliant affair. A full share of the prizes, including occasionally even the gold medal itself, fell to the lot of the female students; and the applause was loud and long as the young ladies, in pretty evening dresses, received their medals, with smiles and blushes, from the hands of the illustrious President, who addressed a few gracious congratulatory words to each. How time has changed this annual gathering since the days when my father received his two medals from the hands of Fuseli in Somerset House, or even since my own day, when the unemotional and placid Eastlake handed the medals one after another to young men with rough and rather long hair, dressed in their ordinary daily coats, who, as they retired to their seats amidst boisterous applause, received violent smacks on the back from their fellow students!

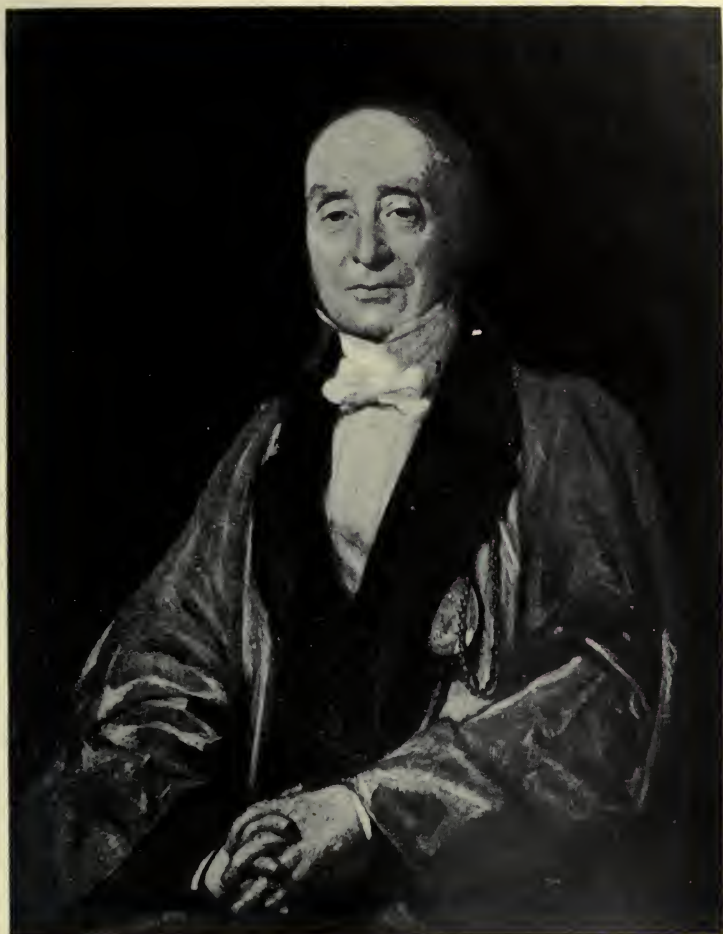
I do not remember anything of the sort when I was a student, but not long after I left the Schools, what were called "students' suppers" began to be held, at some tavern, to commemorate this distribution of the gold medals and to drink the healths of the respective winners.

The Keeper was generally invited to these suppers as well as some of the Visitors for the year. I only went to one of these in 1875, when Frank Dicksee and Hamo Thornycroft were the recipients of the gold medals for painting and sculpture. It was a most delightful evening,



enlivened by speeches, songs, and recitations. George Grossmith and his brother Weedon, the latter being an Academy student at the time, were among the guests; there was a piano in the room, at which George gave us some of his inimitable performances; his father was there too, and he delivered an exceedingly humorous burlesque lecture.

Fred Barnard, also a student at that time, sang a song of his own composition entitled "The Seven Stages of the Academy Student." I remember that evening as one of the pleasantest I ever spent in my life, and I have no doubt but that my dear old friends, the two gold medallists, do so too.



[T. P. Knight, F.A.  
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## CHAPTER VII

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

THE Academy had not been long in possession of their new abode in Burlington House before the members began to feel that something ought to be done towards the expansion and alteration of the teaching and general management of the Schools. In the limited accommodation of Somerset House and Trafalgar Square, the old rounds of study from the antique and from the life had been deemed sufficient; but there was now so much space at our disposal, there were so many large and well lit class-rooms that the members found some difficulty in making use of them. The old fashioned "furniture," which had been brought from the former home of the Academy, seemed scanty and inadequate in the new premises. For many years previous to the removal to Burlington House repeated suggestions had from time to time been made by various members for improvements and alterations both in the teaching and the admission of the



students. My father told me of one rather advanced proposal made by a member, sometime in the 'forties, which was that candidates for admission to the Schools should present with their drawings a certificate of having matriculated at a university, or at least of having had a first-class education at some good school. I need scarcely say that this innovation found little support. Such a law would have excluded from the Schools, amongst many others, such students as Turner, Landseer, Chantrey, Millais, and Constable. Numerous other suggestions of a more reasonable character had been made, but want of space generally proved sufficient to prevent their adoption.

It was not until the last year of Sir Francis Grant's Presidency that a Committee was appointed to consider the general revision of the School laws. This Committee after sixteen meetings, protracted over more than a year, at length sent in their report to the Council. In the hands of the Council the whole subject was considered and revised at intervals as time permitted, for rather more than another year. The report thus amended by the Council was finally laid before the General Assembly, and after eight meetings, at which the whole subject was again most elaborately discussed, the new laws for the Schools were passed in the year 1881. The great interest that the members take in the Schools, and the care and labour they bestow in endeavouring to obtain the best results from them, is, I think, shown by the time taken

in thus sifting and resifting the report of the original committee.

Among many changes that were adopted in the teaching, the most important, perhaps, was a sort of intermediary class between the Antique and the Life Schools; it was a preliminary class, called "the Lower School of Painting." A teaching "Curator" had charge of this; the work done in it consisted of drawing from the head, painting in monochrome from casts, copying from examples of the Old Masters studies of drapery, and of still life. Complaints had frequently been made by Visitors in the Painting School that many of the students who entered from the Antique into that School possessed little or no ability in the use of the palette and brush, and it was chiefly with the view to remedying this state of affairs that the new intermediary class was instituted.

Calderon had not been in office as Keeper for more than a year and a half before another Committee was appointed to consider still further and to revise the School laws.

The quality of the work done by the students did not seem very satisfactory to many of the members; for although a very fair number of young men and some female students passed through the Schools with advantage and afterwards distinguished themselves, the great bulk of the students' work was characterised by general mediocrity. In 1889 the report, having been delivered by the Committee, and further revised by the Council, came before the General

Assembly, when it was exhaustively discussed at a number of meetings and finally confirmed.

The changes made by this second Committee chiefly related to the rules regulating the admission of probationers and to the tests for students passing up from one school to another.

One alteration, suggested by Lord Leighton, that the hour for the admission of the students in the morning should be changed from 10 to 9 A.M., was adopted, but after a year's trial the former hour of ten o'clock had to be re-introduced, as it was found that the Schools remained comparatively empty until ten o'clock, owing to the fact that a majority of the students came from some distance and were unable to attend at the earlier hour.

In the year 1892 electric lighting was first used in the Schools. This was without doubt a great improvement, rendering the atmosphere of the evening class-rooms far purer and healthier than when gas was used. Another change about this time took place which occasioned much discussion. Up till 1893 female students had not been permitted to study from the nude. They had over and over again petitioned the Council to be allowed this privilege, and at length in 1893 they obtained their desire. They were to be allowed to draw and paint from the partially draped male nude, but it was left to the Visitor for the month to decide whether they should do so or make, as they

had formerly done, drawings and paintings from a wholly draped model. After a few years, study in the Life Classes from the nude male model, partially draped, became universal for female students.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY—*continued*

THE sudden death of Lord Leighton on the 25th January 1896 was one of the severest blows that the Academy had ever received. It was more or less unexpected too, for though those very intimate with him knew of the fatal affection of the heart from which he suffered, he was still only in his sixty-sixth year, and continued to display his usual bright and energetic manners whenever he performed the duties of his office at the Academy. After the eighteen years of his magnificent rule as President, the suddenness of his removal was almost paralysing in its effect on the minds alike of the members and students of the Academy. A little more than a month before his death he had delivered his customary discourse, on the occasion of the distribution of the prizes to the students, during which ceremony, though no one present was aware of it but himself, he endured one of those fearful spasms of pain to which he was liable. He met a few of us as he was returning to the Assembly Room, and I can never forget the

affecting anxiety with which he asked us, "Did I show it?"

The loss which the Academy suffered by the death of its illustrious President was not very long afterwards followed by the illness of its Keeper. He had been far from well for some time, and leave of absence had been accorded to him, in the hope that rest and country air might restore him to his usual health; it proved, however, of little avail, and just about the time of the opening of the Exhibition of 1898 Calderon passed away peacefully at Burlington House.

Ernest Crofts was then elected Keeper; although he had been a Royal Academician but for two years, the choice of the members proved a very wise one, for no Keeper of whom I have had any experience has fulfilled the duties of his office with greater tact and ability. With the students he was extremely popular; he maintained order and discipline with natural ease and dignity.

The Keeper as a permanent member of the Council is of great use to that body, being at all times able to give it every information upon the state and working of the Schools. He forms also a sort of connecting link between the rest of the members and those on the Council; in both these functions Crofts displayed the utmost readiness and discretion. To the Visitors, also, he was most useful, affording them at all times every assistance in his power.

Crofts had a handsome face, a pleasant voice, and extremely refined manners. He had not

been a student of the Academy himself, for he had received the greater part of his artistic training at Dusseldorf; but, though he passed a considerable number of the years of his youth in Germany, he never lost the national characteristics imprinted on him by his English birth and his Rugby school days.

A short time after Sir Edward Poynter succeeded to the Presidency, the minds of the members were again perturbed by the quality of the work done in the Schools. A great many suggestions were made for the improvement of the teaching, as well as for changes in the rules for the admission of the probationers. The Council was once more occupied for a long time in framing new laws and suggesting alterations in the old, and finally laid its report before the General Assembly in the spring of 1902.

There was without doubt a fair supply of young students, chiefly, however, females, passing through our Schools. The teaching by Visitors in the upper classes was still probably the best that could be obtained in the United Kingdom. The prizes and scholarships were numerous and valuable. The Schools were absolutely free. But in spite of all these advantages there was a distinct falling off in the number of those students of exceptional ability who, by their example, might have served to keep up the quality and excellence of the work in general.

It seemed to me that preliminary teaching in our Schools, though probably beneficial to the



well-coached dullards, was looked upon as so much waste time by the more highly gifted, who, in these later days, wished for a more rapid development of their powers than the Academy afforded, and sought this either abroad or in some of the numerous private schools which had latterly come into existence.

The one advantage we possessed over all other schools was the teaching carried on by our distinguished members who acted as Visitors; and it was, in my opinion, the expansion and elaboration of this teaching that should be considered beyond anything else; all preliminary work might well be left to the Government Art-Schools and the numberless preparatory establishments which could be found elsewhere. I felt so strongly that this was the right course to take, in order to restore the pre-eminence of our Schools, that I wrote a letter expressing my opinions on the subject, and had it printed and sent to all the members of the Academy. From many of these, especially from those who took most interest in the Schools, I received answers expressing decided approval of the views I held. Thus encouraged, I moved at the next General Meeting a resolution that for the future all preliminary teaching should be abandoned, and that students, who had shown sufficient proofs of their ability as probationers, should be at once passed into the upper schools. This resolution, after a short discussion, was carried unanimously by the General Assembly and passed during the summer of 1902.



For six years the Schools were carried on without the elaborate preliminary classes. For a time there was not much difference observable in the general output of the students' work; if there were no improvement, at any rate there were no signs, so far as I could see, of falling off. And so I am convinced that a fair trial was not given to the new scheme; in the first place, no change was made in the system of the admission of the probationers, and, secondly, nothing was done in the way of expanding the teaching in the upper School, so as to make it more comprehensive and interesting. All that was taught by means of Visitors remained the same as before — namely, life - sized paintings from the head and drawings and paintings from the nude figure. But what I had hoped to see in some of the class-rooms vacated by the preliminary Schools, was a series of lessons given by Visitors in composition, in decorative work, or even in landscape—lessons which could be rendered very effective if the Visitors used either borrowed examples of the Old Masters or engravings of fine works taken from the Library.

If the teaching were to be confined to the upper Schools, which alone came under the supervision of the Visitors, stricter and more efficient tests ought to have been made for the admission of probationers, tests which would have served to weed out those who were merely painstaking incompetents. Such tests might have been introduced as time drawings, or the production of folios of drawing and studies from nature,

of landscapes, animals, and such-like subjects done by the student unaided. Nothing, however, was done in either of these two ways. The same number of students was admitted as before, and, I expect, the same number of "well coached" incompetents among them.

At the end of his month's sittings a Visitor is required to fill in a report of the attendances, etc., of the class he has been teaching, adding any remarks which he may wish to make as to the state of the School. These reports are from time to time laid before the Council. In the year 1908 some of the Visitors drew attention in their reports to the fact that in the class for painting from the life, there were many students hopelessly deficient in knowledge of the use of the brush; and they, at the same time, suggested that it was desirable to re-introduce the system of preliminary teaching. It did not apparently occur to these Visitors that the simpler plan would have been to eliminate the incompetents altogether. A little drastic weeding and thinning out from time to time, though it might, no doubt, reduce the number of the students, would have effected all that was necessary. And, if the teaching by the Visitors had been expanded in the directions I have above mentioned, so as to make it fuller and more interesting to the students, I firmly believe that the number of really capable students would very soon have largely increased.

It seemed, however, wiser to the majority of my brother members to go back to the old

cumbrous machinery of the Preliminary Classes and, with the addition of a salaried teacher as master, to engage once more in the almost hopeless task of coaching up the poor incompetents. The pace in the Schools was again to be set by the slowest, to the great detriment, in my opinion, of the rest of the students and of the prosperity of the Schools in general.

In 1908 a Committee was again appointed ; its report was revised by the Council and afterwards passed by the General Assembly. In 1909 the Preliminary Schools were re-established.

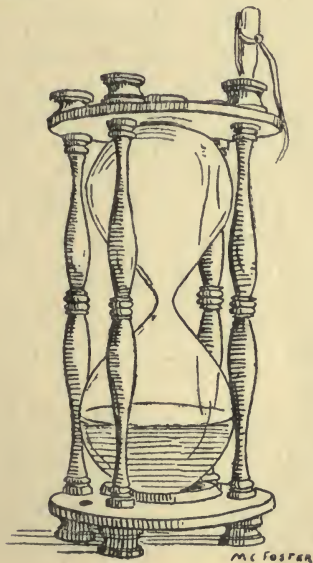
Until the year 1851 the Keeper was the sole controlling power in the Antique School, but, as it was found that the students at times had become rather too unruly, a curator was appointed to keep order in the absence of the Keeper. Mr Woodington, a sculptor who was afterwards elected an Associate, was the first curator. In the Painting School Mr Le Jeune had been appointed curator two years previously. Both these gentlemen had charge of their respective Schools when I was admitted a student. They gave a certain amount of instruction as well as keeping up the discipline of the Schools. Mr Woodington, though a sculptor, employed his spare time, when I was in the Antique, in painting ; he was very quiet and performed his duties in a satisfactory manner.

The Antique School was at times very stuffy as regards its atmosphere, and some other students and myself who loved fresh air sometimes played a trick upon our curator, in order to induce him



to open the windows; we used to place our warm hands over the thermometer and run it up to a high degree, and then call his attention to it, complain of the heat of the room, and thus obtain our desire.

The old Academy hour glass was still used, in the Life Class, in my time, and I never quite knew why its use was given up, for it afforded a capital means of separating the time spent in resting from that spent in sitting. When the model felt tired the hour glass was turned on its side, and turned up again when the rest was over. In an easy pose, if the model was strong and healthy, the glass was sometimes never turned, except at the commencement of the second hour. I am glad to say the old glass has been preserved and is still in the possession of the Academy.





## CHAPTER IX

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS

WHEN an exhibition of pictures takes place the arrangement of it must be done by somebody. Also, if more works than will suffice to fill the space available are forwarded for exhibition, a selection of those which should be placed must be made by some man or body of men.

On the foundation of the Royal Academy, its members decided that the selection and arrangement of works for the annual Exhibitions should be performed by a Council. This Council was to consist, in addition to the President, of eight members, four of whom were to retire every year, and not to re-occupy their seats till all the rest had served; it being further ordered that the seats in the Council should go by succession to all the members of the Society, except the Secretary, who was always to be on the Council.

This arrangement for the formation of the Council has been carried on, with a few alterations as to the number of its members, for one hundred and forty - four years. Among their

other duties the Council, thus formed, undertakes the selection and arrangement of the works sent for the annual Exhibitions. Many suggestions for the improvement of this selecting committee have, from time to time, been made by various members of the Society, all of which, after most careful consideration and discussion, have been discarded as either useless or inadvisable. Long experience of the working of the arrangement seems to have confirmed the members of the Academy in their opinion that it is, under all circumstances, the best that can be devised. That it should have been criticised and condemned by the horde of enemies, to whose attacks the Royal Academy and all its doings have been continually subjected, goes without saying, but no practical reform that would bear the simplest investigation has yet emanated from these hostile sources.

It may be well here to point out a few of the advantages of the academic system that possibly would not occur to the minds of the general public. In the first place the forty Academicians, from whose ranks the Council is taken, may be justly regarded, with very few exceptions, as forty of the most distinguished and experienced artists to be found in the United Kingdom. Even if this should be questioned by the enemies of the Academy, it cannot possibly be denied that as painters, sculptors, or architects, they have distinguished themselves in their profession and possess that intimate knowledge of the composition and execution of paintings, of

sculpture, and of architectural designs which can only be acquired by long practice. It is also evident that the Academicians possess the confidence of the general body of artists of all denominations from the ever-increasing number of works that are yearly submitted for their adjudication. By an overwhelming majority the artists testify to the preference they give the Exhibition at the Academy over any other in the kingdom. Individual disappointments, and even cases of injustice, are occasionally met with, but in spite of this the judgment of the Academy Council, composed as it is entirely of experienced fellow-workers, is regarded by the great bulk of artists in general as the best and fairest that can be found, and as preferable in any case to committees in which Government officials, Art critics, picture dealers, or other lay elements, are mixed up with one or two professional artists.

That the Directors of the Government "Royal College of Art" think very highly of the qualifications of the members of the Academy is clearly shown by the fact that it is from their ranks that the judges for the great yearly national competitions are chiefly chosen.

That the Council is continually changing from year to year is another point which has its advantages to general exhibitors. Amongst such a large body as the members of the Academy, a great variety of opinions and predilections in matters connected with Art must necessarily exist; and, in consequence of this, there is hardly any style or fashion, in the works sent for



exhibition, that does not in one year or another find supporters in the Academy itself, or favour even among the members of the Council.

Another wholesome factor in the constitution of the Council is that all new members of the Academy take their seats on the Council on the first year following their election. One, two, and sometimes three newly-elected members' names appear continually on the lists of members serving on the Council, which lists have been regularly printed and preserved since the foundation of the institution. I call this a wholesome arrangement as it ensures a pretty regular admission of young men to the Council. They come to their duties with fresh eyes, frequently with fresh ideas of great value; they are, so to speak, more in touch with the exhibitors outside the Academy than are many of the elder members.

In the year 1871 the number of the Council was increased to twelve, and the number on the Hanging Committee to five. This alteration was made soon after the Academy had entered into possession of its new premises in Burlington House, in which the greatly increased wall space rendered it almost impossible for the arrangement of the works to be accomplished in the usual time by three members, which up till then had been the number of the Hanging Committee. Apparently this increase was found to form a rather unwieldy Council; indeed, if all the members of the Council, together with the *ex officio* members and the President, attended a meeting, they would have been very incon-



veniently crowded at the Council table. At any rate, for this or some other reason, in the year 1876 the number of the Council was reduced to ten, at which figure it has remained ever since. The Hanging Committee consists of the five painter members newly serving on the Council, an architect, a sculptor, and, quite recently, an engraver being added to make arrangements for the works in their respective branches of Art. I have myself served on the Council five times, which means for ten years, on nine of which I also served on the Hanging Committee.

No other members are admitted to the exhibition rooms during the selection or the arrangement of the pictures except the President and the Council. When the Committee appointed to hang the pictures has finished its work, the President with the whole of the Council passes through the entire exhibition. The President asks the Council as they pass along if any one sees anything to object to in the arrangement of the pictures in each room; after this ceremony the Council is supposed to be responsible, as a body, for the Committee's work, and no further alterations can be made.

People still speak of pictures being hung "on the line," but very few indeed, even amongst the present members themselves, know the origin of the term; the common belief that it implies a place on the walls on a level with a spectator's eye is more or less correct; but when the Exhibitions were held in Somerset House and Trafalgar Square, the term meant something far more

definite. In those days people not only spoke of pictures being hung "on the line" but "above the line" and "below the line." "The line" was then a regular and permanent fixture; it was a horizontal line exactly eight feet from the floor, marked by a projecting ledge that left the surface of the wall below it two inches in advance of that which was above it.

A picture was said to be hung "on the line" when the top of its frame was level with this ledge. Hung thus, the picture, unless a very small one indeed, was exactly at the height to be viewed comfortably by a spectator standing in front of it. Sometimes a picture, if not very large, was not hung quite up to the line, but a foot or nine inches below it, in which case two or more quite small pictures, termed by the hangers "little bricks," were placed on the line to fill up the vacant gap. In the year 1856 Sir John Millais's picture, "Autumn Leaves," was thus hung below the line in the middle room in Trafalgar Square, and my first exhibited picture, (a very small one, of a dead canary bird, exhibited under a feigned name) was one of the little bricks, "on the line," which filled up the space above it. It was in the year 1859 that a picture of mine had again the honour of serving as a little brick to Sir John Millais; it was a small one entitled "Reminiscence of the Ball" (a young lady looking at a programme of dances), which attracted the notice of Mr Ruskin; it was placed immediately beneath Sir John's splendid work, "The Vale of Rest."

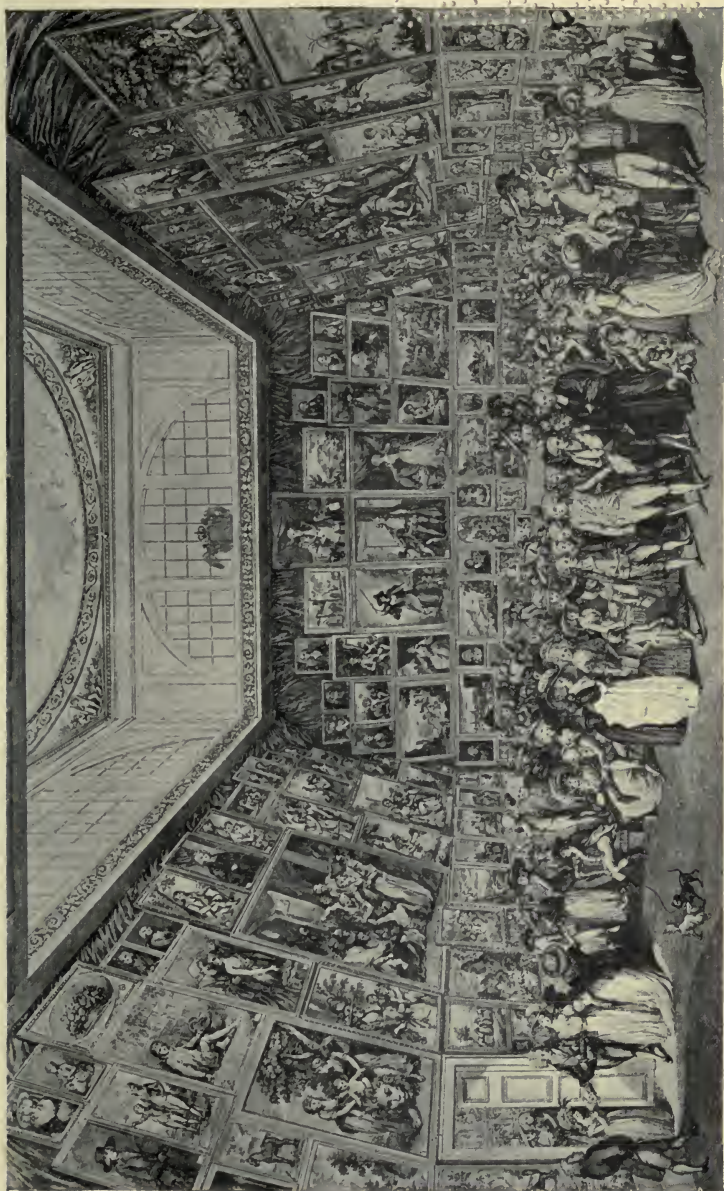
The rule in old times was that all very large pictures, as well as whole-length and half-length portraits, had to be placed above the line, the bottoms of their frames resting on the ledge which marked the line, but no lower. The line was thus preserved level, no pictures breaking through it either from above or below, although in some very exceptional cases this rule was, by permission of the Council, held in abeyance.

The line thus described is very plainly shown in the drawing by Ramberg of the Exhibition in 1787. In this there is a slight break in the line, in the centre of the right hand wall, probably to allow some Royal portrait to be hung; or it may depict only a bit of rather bad hanging on the part of the Committee.

The upper pictures above the line, in old times, were very much tilted forward, the lower ones resting firmly on the ledge, and those above them resting on the tops of the frames of those below, with battens of wood screwed to their backs to keep them in line. The pictures, above the line, got a very good light, leaning forward as they did, and there was an advantage in their being all tilted at the same angle.

In Burlington House each picture is supported on brackets and there is no uniform angle in the matter of tilting, but although there are not nearly so many works above the line, as in the old times, I think the upper rows of pictures are not so well lit as they used to be in the old galleries, though it is possible that the better planned skylights in the old building may have





[Ramberger.

THE PRIVATE VIEW IN 1787.

[To face p. 76.





had something to do with it. Having the convenience of this permanent eight feet ledge to work from, the hanging was, in old times, a far simpler matter than it is in the rooms of Burlington House at the present day, where the whole wall space above the dado is free for all pictures of any size or subject.

According to my father's account of the method usually adopted in his time, the members of the Hanging Committee began with the large pictures which had to go above the line. There was comparatively little room to stow away the works that were sent for exhibition in those days, and by getting rid of the larger ones first valuable elbow room was obtained. The hangers looked over these large pictures, and, selecting the most important, had them placed in the respective centres of the three principal rooms, such works as whole-length portraits of Royal personages generally being placed in posts of honour in the large room. Whole-length portraits were not the only large pictures which occupied these centres over the line; I remember seeing, in 1847, the large triptych of Joan of Arc by Etty in the centre of the East Room, above the line. Large pictures of historical subjects which had figures in them of life-size were always hung above the line in former days. In a letter to my father in 1836 Constable says: "Wilkie recommends me to paint a large picture for over the line next year."<sup>1</sup> If he had lived I believe he would have done so.

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs," p. 277.

A great deal may be said for the old plan of hanging the larger works above the line; for instance, when such works are hung, as they are in our present Exhibitions, they can never be properly seen in their entirety from the day of the private view until the close of the Exhibition, for the spectator cannot stand at the necessary distance without having his view perpetually intercepted by persons passing in front of him. In the large public halls or club-rooms, to which most of them finally go, whole-length and even half-length portraits are seldom hung less than eight feet from the floor, and even in private houses they are most frequently hung quite as high as this.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS—*continued*

THE rule which allows life-sized portraits and other large pictures to be hung on the dado, was passed when the Academy came into possession of their new galleries in Burlington House, and it has led to a general increase in the size of canvases. Landscape painters think nothing, in the present day, of painting four six-foot pictures for exhibition every year, whereas one such picture, over the execution of which probably more than a year had been taken, was looked upon by Constable or Turner as quite an exceptional effort.

Much complaint is heard among the painters of the present day at the small amount of patronage which is accorded to their works; and although, no doubt, other reasons can be found for this sad state of affairs, I believe the large increase in the size of their canvases has much to do with it. Very few private patrons can find room for more than one or two pictures, measuring in their frames from seven to eight feet in length.



Some of these large works are occasionally purchased by the Chantrey Fund or for the public galleries in the colonies or in our provincial towns; but few indeed now find their resting-place on the walls of private collectors, the majority of them remaining, at the close of the Exhibition, the property of the artists.

When the pictures are being hung and on the members' varnishing days the walls of the galleries look well enough. The rooms not being filled with spectators, the large works on the dado are fairly seen, and the Hanging Committee often feels contented and pleased with the dignity of its arrangement; but it does not always sufficiently consider how this effect will be lost when the Exhibition is opened to the public. In my opinion if a low line of moderately-sized pictures were, more or less, preserved on the dado, the larger works and those with figures of life-size in them being ranged above them, not only all the pictures would be better seen, but the interest of the Exhibition to the general public would be greatly increased. As it is at present, perhaps the most interesting room, as far as the public is concerned, is No. IX., the "Gem Room," as members call it (by the way it is the best lit room); but as visitors to the Academy, in making the round of the galleries generally follow the catalogue, they are, by the time they arrive at it usually too tired to enjoy the pictures properly.

Our portrait painters would, without doubt, object very strongly to such an arrangement as

I have suggested, for it would raise the level of their numerous half-length life-sized portraits some four or five feet above the dado; but surely if Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Thomas Lawrence, and the other great portrait painters, whose works adorned the Academy walls in former days, were quite contented with even higher situations for their pictures, there can be little ground for present day objections. The alteration need not necessarily be made in all the rooms, but I am convinced that if it were tried in the large room and in one or two of the others, it would have a very beneficial effect—not only by increasing the interest that the public takes in the Exhibition, but by breaking up the painful monotony which at present prevails in almost all the rooms from the alternations of life-sized portraits with large landscapes.

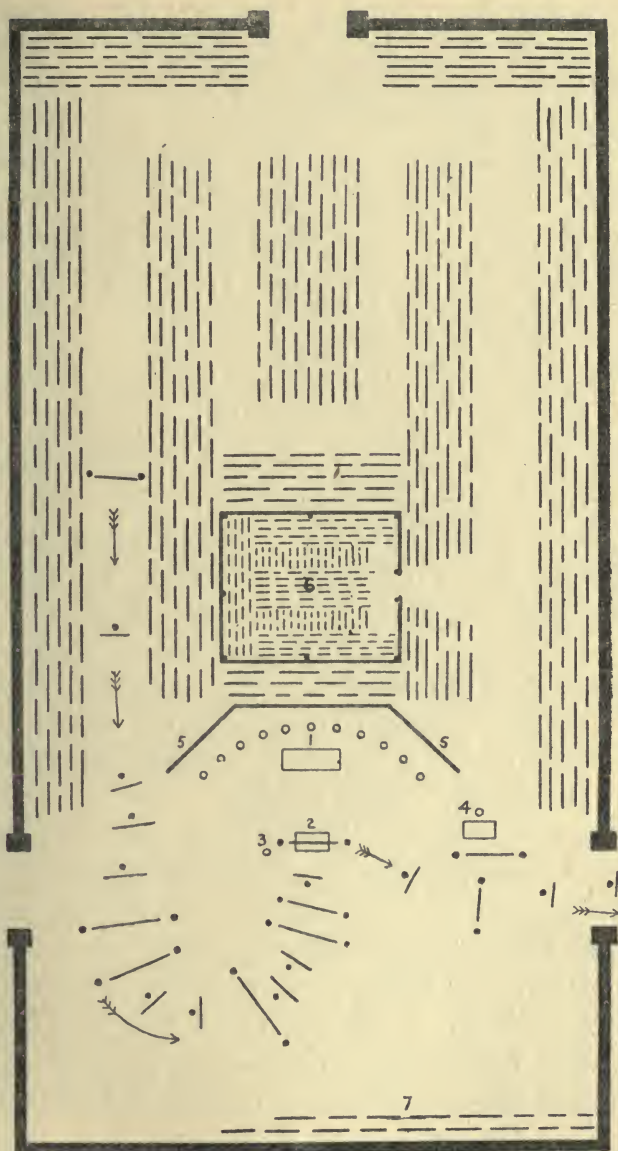
For the selection of works for the Exhibition the President and Council meet on a Monday, either in the last week in March or the first week in April, and continue sitting from day to day until all the works sent in have passed before them. On the first day, after a few preliminary words in the Council Room on the Exhibition in general, the Council adjourns to the large room, known as No. III., which has been carefully arranged beforehand. The disposition of the pictures in this room and the situation of the President's and the Council's chairs will be readily understood by reference to the accompanying plan. The east end of the room is taken up by ranks

of pictures sent for exhibition, shown in the plan by the shaded portions; they are stacked six or seven deep against the walls and in blocks in the centre. A vast number of small ones are in what is termed "the Pound," which is a square enclosure in the middle of the room, made of stout open wood-work, very much resembling the old wooden pounds for stray cattle still occasionally seen in country villages; in this the small pictures are carefully stacked on their backs, one upon another, six or more feet in depth. The Pound is numbered 6 in the accompanying plan. Against the outer sides of this structure, which is about nine feet high, a number of the larger pictures are stacked, leaving the entrance to the Pound free. Many more of the oil pictures are placed in the vestibule and in some of the other rooms.

To a newly-elected member, serving for the first time on the Council, the number of works sent for exhibition appears something appalling. Between four or five long weary days are spent in looking through the oil pictures alone, and it generally takes five more days to go through all the other works, the water-colour drawings and, in recent years, the miniatures being exceedingly numerous.

The west end of the room, as will be seen in the plan, is kept free from pictures. A large red screen is placed with its back to the Pound, to keep off the draught from the members of the Council, who, with the President in the centre, sit in front of the screen with a small table before them. The rooms during the period





1. The President and Council. 2. A picture under examination. 3. The foreman who marks the pictures. 4. The Secretary. 5. The Screen. 6. The Pound. 7. Accepted pictures.



of selection are generally very cold and draughty on account of the continual opening of the great lift in the centre vestibule, up which the cold air rushes from the open doors below. The weather is oftener than not very cold at that time of the year, and the members of the Council usually sit in their great coats, with rugs over their knees. I remember in one year, when we were examining the sculpture, many of us opened umbrellas to keep off the cold draughts.

In front of the Council table, at a convenient distance, a stool is placed, having a revolving top to it, which is padded and covered with leather, on which each picture is rested for its examination. The foreman carpenter stands on the left-hand side of the picture with a lump of chalk in his hand to mark each work, at the President's bidding, with an A, a D, or a cross, signifying accepted, doubtful, or rejected, as the case may be; the carpenters bring the pictures up to the stool in endless succession. For larger works the stool is moved farther away from the Council table.

It has often been urged by the enemies of the Royal Academy that the selection of the works sent for exhibition is performed by the Council in a hurried and cursory way; this belief is, of course, firmly held by all those unfortunates whose works are rejected, but I am convinced that it is quite a mistaken one. One, or possibly two, errors of judgment may, from time to time, occur. Hostile critics in the daily press seize upon and expose all such errors with avidity; but one mistake in looking through some seven thousand works is



[C. W. Cope, R.A.]

SIR FRANCIS GRANT AND HIS COUNCIL.



surely far too small a percentage to invalidate the judgment of the ten skilled and experienced artists who compose the Council. Great numbers of very bad works indeed are sent for the Exhibition, and these, it is true, pass quickly enough to their doom unchallenged by the Council; but all works of tolerable ability are carefully looked at and duly voted upon by the Council, the President giving his casting vote, when necessary, always on the side of mercy.

A comparatively small number of works are absolutely accepted, but all so accepted have to be hung without any option on the part of the Hanging Committee. The doubtful ones, of which there are great numbers, are left to the discretion of the hangers, and a large majority of these are eventually hung.

The accepted works do not leave the large room; the names of the artists are taken down by the secretary, and the pictures are stacked along the western wall. The pictures that take the longest time for adjudication are those emanating from the studios of young artists, followers of some new school or cult, which may be at the time in high favour and fashion. Over pictures of this sort there is always certain to be a diversity of opinion, some members condemning them as mere attempts to attract attention by senseless eccentricity of treatment, others extolling them as works full of talent and genius of the highest order. The voting usually assigns to such pictures a place among the "doubtfuls," but in the end they always



get hung, more often than not in very good places. The early works of the Pre-Raphaelites were examples of what I may term "debateable pictures," and the fighting in the Council over them was extremely fierce; but, greatly to the credit of the Academy, members of discrimination who recognised the sincerity of purpose of the rising school were found in sufficient numbers to carry the votes in their favour, and the pictures eventually found first-rate places on the walls. There is a prevalent idea that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood movement was treated by the Academy with hostility, but this is entirely erroneous. Millais's and Holman Hunt's early works were invariably well hung—at a time, too, when they were being condemned with the utmost virulence by the generality of the critics in the press, and even before the powerful voice of Ruskin had been heard in their favour. And so it has ever been, as far as I know, with the Councils of the Royal Academy. Youthful genius of real promise has never failed to find recognition from some at least of the members of the Council, whose wise discrimination and judgment have in the end always prevailed.

On the first day of the selection the Council gets through its work without much friction. The greater part of the works that come up for judgment on that day are drawn from the provinces, and these generally arrive at the Academy a day earlier than those coming from the studios in town, where the most celebrated "outsiders" usually reside. A majority of these early arrivals get rejected right

away, and new members on the Council begin to fear that there will be hardly any pictures sent in at all worth hanging; but towards the evening a marked increase in the number of works of a better class sets in, and the little row of accepted pictures receives some notable additions.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS—*continued*

ON the second day the battle begins in earnest—the members warm up to their work, differences of opinion become very frequent, and recounts are constantly being demanded from the President. The first day seldom passes without one or two members having had their feelings ruffled by the untoward fate of some picture that they themselves greatly admired. This hardens them up a bit; they have tasted blood, and they become extremely critical in their judgment on any works that other members of the committee, in their turn, may admire. As time goes on, however, these little “breezes” die away; the advent of a picture of extra merit, or even of one, the badness of which is absolutely ridiculous, often has the effect of restoring the general harmony. Artists when in one another’s company are not given to much sulking; they mostly, too, have a strong sense of humour, which greatly helps to lighten their labours at all times. Smoking is allowed during the selection, and affords, to those addicted to the habit, a never failing consolation.

Smoking was first permitted to members on the selection and hanging of the pictures when Sir Francis Grant succeeded to the presidential chair. At one time during his Presidency a fine was imposed on any member who hindered the business of the Council, after a vote had been taken, by remarks of a recriminatory character — as, for instance, by saying: “You admitted so-and-so’s picture just now, that was not half as good as this one you have just rejected.” In such a case as this the objector had to stand a bottle of champagne at lunch or dinner; this system of fines was, I am sorry to say, abolished before I came on the Council in 1877. Such remarks are very irritating, besides being needless, as every member of the Council can, if he likes, have any picture that he thinks has been unfairly condemned brought up for reconsideration at the close of the selection. The pictures thus called back are placed in the vestibule, where the Council go and view them, the challenger being then allowed to advocate the cause of the pictures he has asked for. As a rule there are seldom more than a dozen pictures so brought back; but a member on one occasion established a record, no less than seventeen works being brought up for reconsideration at his desire. If the champagne fine had been in existence in that year the Council would, I think, have had enough wine to last them for the whole of the three weeks during which they were engaged on their work.

The small pictures in the Pound take a long



time to go through. It is wearisome work, and sometimes as a break in the monotony the President orders a temporary "cease fire" on these small works, and the carpenters return to the larger ones again. This changing in the size of the pictures, not only relieves the monotony of the Council's work, but is very welcome to the carpenters also. The poor men get very tired of constantly carrying the pictures, and when the whistle sounds at one o'clock they at once lie down on the floor in groups and eat their dinners, almost reminding me of a flock of bullocks resting.

The very large pictures, whole-length portraits and others, are looked at last of all. These are not carried before the Council, but are arranged overnight against the walls of the large room, and the Councillors walk round to judge each in turn.

After the Oil pictures have all been seen the Council adjourns to the Architectural Room where it commences on the Water-colour and Black and White works. The water-colour pictures are not stacked but laid one on the top of another in solid blocks, generally in the rooms numbered ten and eleven, the architectural drawings as well being put in these rooms. The sculpture is generally looked at last. The Council sits at first in the large sculpture room where all the busts and smaller works are brought up one at a time, and judgment is there passed on them in the same manner as on the pictures. After this the Council walks round and views

the larger and heavier figures, groups, and the like.

The foreign pictures which are sent every year in great numbers to the Academy generally give rise to a question concerning the terms on which they should be admitted. The first Council on which I served, during Sir Francis Grant's Presidency, decided to limit each foreign exhibitor to one work only. A rather curious incident happened in connection with this decision, which may be worth relating as an example of the chances that frequently affect the fate of pictures in the annual exhibitions. H.R.H. the Princess Louise had presented to the Royal Academy sometime previously a bust of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the work of her own hands; this had been placed in the centre of the vestibule, where it had since remained among the other works of sculpture sent to the annual Exhibitions. It occurred to the Princess that this was rather an anomalous arrangement, and she wrote a letter to Sir Francis Grant on the subject. The President communicated this letter to the Council, suggesting that the Princess should be invited to visit the Academy before the arrangement was quite finished and to make her own choice of a more suitable situation for the bust. The Princess gladly accepted this invitation and came to the Academy on a day appointed, accompanied by the Marquis of Lorne. The bust had already been moved to the place in the large room where it has remained ever since. The Princess was quite satisfied with the alteration, and the

Secretary (for Sir Francis was too ill to attend himself) then asked her if she would like to go through the rooms and view the Exhibition, which she was much pleased to do.

It happened, however, that year that a portrait of the Duke of Argyll, which had been sent for exhibition, had not been placed. It was the work of a foreigner, and as he had one work, a Royal portrait, already in a good place on the walls, we, by our rule, had excluded the Duke's portrait. When the Princess enquired about the fate of the picture, this explanation was, of course, given, and was graciously accepted. But in the course of the afternoon the Secretary, on looking through the proofs of the catalogue discovered that this rule as to foreign pictures had been broken in one instance, two works by an Italian artist having good places in one of the rooms. This had at once to be rectified. The hanging was virtually completed, the doubtful pictures, which still remained unhung, were being rapidly cleared away. Sir Edward Poynter and I had one of the Italian's pictures, a small one, taken down, and then we recollected a remarkably clever work by an Irish painter named Helmick entitled "Bother," representing two Irish peasants arguing over a knotty point; we had both liked this picture, and had tried many times to find a place for it. At the moment a large load of pictures was on the trolley ready for descent on the lift; I caught sight of a corner of a picture that projected a little, which I thought might possibly be that for which we wished, and to



our delight it proved to be the very one. It was thus rescued, as it were, from the very gates of Hades, and in a few moments placed in a first-rate place on the line in one of the principal rooms, for by the same good luck it fitted the space, left vacant by the Italian, to a nicety.

There are so few members now living, beside myself, who have served on a Council during the Presidency of Sir Francis Grant that I must here crave my reader's indulgence for breaking off from my description of the work of the Hanging Committee, in order to pay a short tribute to the memory of that distinguished President by giving a few reminiscences of his delightful personality and of the admirable manner that he discharged the duties of his office. Tall and handsome in person, dignified and courteous in manners, he united the characteristics of an aristocratic Scot with those of an English country gentleman of the best type. Sir Edwin Landseer once told me that he never saw any one in the hunting field who took his fences with greater coolness and ease than Sir Francis. Grant was too ill to go through the labours of the chair on either of the occasions when I was on the Council for selection, but he presided at many other meetings of the Council at which I was present, and I can truly say that as a chairman he greatly distinguished himself by his extreme common sense, his impartiality, and his unfailing good temper. Though his voice was slightly defective, he acquitted himself ably enough at the annual banquets. He said the



right things with considerable tact, and he was rather brief, courteously and wisely, I used to think, leaving the glory of the evening to the eloquence of the distinguished assembly, the guests of the Royal Academy.

Sir Francis took a considerable amount of pains and trouble in the preparation of the discourses which he delivered to the students on the occasions of the annual distribution of the prizes. I remember his bringing the manuscript, of the first one he delivered, to Sir Edwin Landseer for his advice and criticism; I was in Sir Edwin's studio at the time, and I remember how nervous Sir Francis seemed about it as he read it over to Sir Edwin, who suggested a few slight alterations. I heard most of Grant's discourses, and I admired them greatly for their straightforward soundness and common sense. One of them, however, I certainly cannot say I heard, although I was present at its delivery, for after a few words at the commencement, the jangling of the bells of St Martin's church entirely drowned Sir Francis's voice; here and there the names of Sir Joshua Reynolds or Michael Angelo could be caught strangely mixed up with the traditional "five farthings" of the bells.

Through my father and Sir Edwin Landseer I knew Sir Francis a little personally, and on several occasions he was most kind to me. It was through his introduction that I painted a small portrait of the Earl of Derby and his grandson at Knowsley.

At the selection of pictures in 1877, the first

occasion on which I was present, a whole-length portrait of a nobleman, who happened to be a personal friend of Sir Francis Grant, was rejected; the President had been too ill to attend the Council of Selection himself, but he came down to the Academy just before the hanging was completed. He asked me what we had done with the portrait, and noticing my hesitation in answering, said, "It was d——d bad, eh? Well—it can't be helped, he ought to have gone to a better artist." He never wasted time grumbling over spilt milk, and did all he could to prevent his Council ever doing it either, as his institution of the bottle of champagne fine testifies.

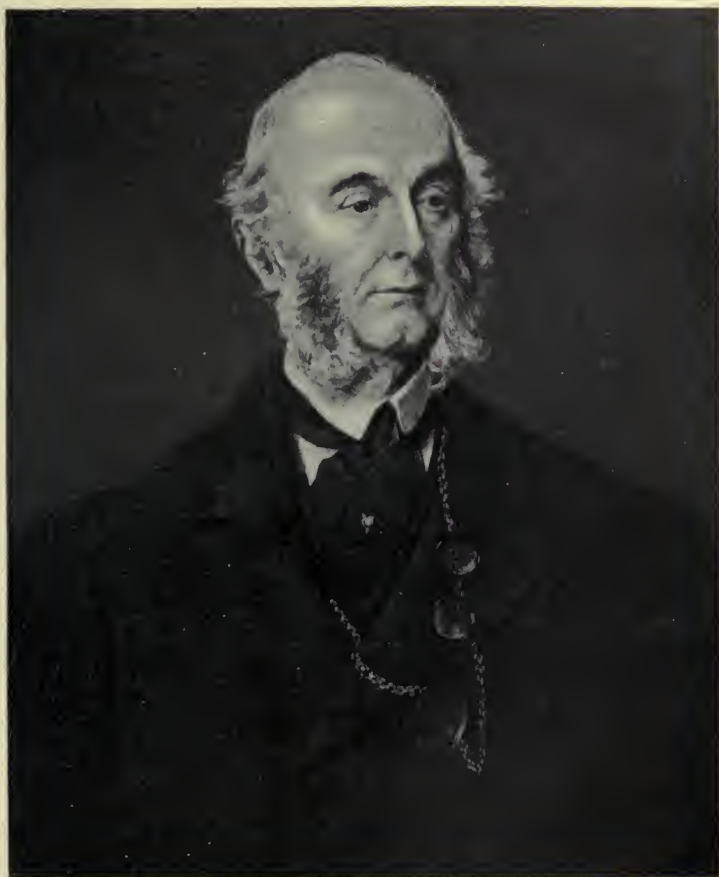
My acquaintance with Sir Francis Grant was chiefly in his later years, when he had become a martyr to frequent attacks of gout; but even in these days he always maintained the good temper and geniality which was so natural to him, and his conversation was enlivened by constant little flashes of wit and humour. My father often spoke of the clever and witty speeches that Sir Francis made at the General Assemblies—speeches, too, which were nearly always on the right side of the question in debate.

On his election as an Associate in the year 1842, Sir Francis, when his health had been drunk, at an Academy lunch, in returning thanks made the members laugh by declaring the embarrassment which he felt, it being the first time in his life that he had had the honour of addressing an assembly of sober men. My father related

an answer Grant gave to a lady who enquired whether he was not an R.A. "No, madam—I am an A.R.A.," with such an emphasis on the "A" as to lead the lady to suppose it a higher title.

When Sir Charles Eastlake died the Presidency was at first offered to Sir Edwin Landseer; chiefly, I believe, at the express wish of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Sir Edwin, however, emphatically declined the proffered honour. He had, at the time, but just recovered from his first attack of mental depression, besides which he had common sense enough to know how thoroughly unfitted he was in many ways to fulfil the duties of the high office. He himself named his great friend, Grant, as the man most suited to fill the vacant chair; and this, together with Sir Francis's great popularity with his brother members, ensured his election as President without opposition of any sort.

In 1878 Sir Francis Grant died. According to his own wish he was buried at Melton Mowbray, in the very heart of the hunting country that he had loved so much. Almost every one of the Members and Associates of the Royal Academy attended his funeral. It was a lovely day; the fine old church and the churchyard were crowded with his friends. Wreaths were sent from the Queen and the Prince of Wales. The coffin was followed by his immediate relatives, by persons of high rank, by the members of the Royal Academy, and by very many of the sportsmen of the neighbourhood.



[*Sir Francis Grant.*

SIR FRANCIS GRANT, P.R.A.

[To face p. 96.]



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



BEDTIME.

*From a sketch by the Author, 1876.*

UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA

The portrait of Sir Francis Grant, painted by himself, which the Academy possesses, though giving fairly enough the general aspect of the man, fails in rendering the dignity and geniality of his usual expression.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS—*continued*

I NOW return to the labours of the Hanging Committee in the arrangement of the pictures that have been left by the Council to its discretion. The whole Committee generally meets together in the large room and holds a consultation on the general method of procedure which its members think most desirable. In some years a further revision of the doubtful works is decided upon, the whole of these being again passed before the Committee. A selection is made of all those that appear to have the greatest merit, and these are placed apart from the rest. This plan, I think, is a good one, as it saves much time in hunting them up afterwards among the general stacks. The hangers then determine what pictures shall occupy the various principal centres, the so-called posts of honour. There generally is considerable discussion over this, and repeated changes are made before the matter is finally settled. The Committee then separates, the arrangement of one or perhaps two of the rooms being assigned to the individual care of each member of the Com-

mittee, subject, of course, to the approval of the whole Committee. The work of arranging and hanging the Exhibition is certainly pretty hard and fatiguing, but far more agreeable than that of sitting day after day through the painful monotony of the selection.

Each hanger has a measuring rod, five feet in length, marked with feet and inches, which he finds of great use when searching for pictures. He has two carpenters reserved for his special use; and in case he has to deal with very large works two others have to be found to help. Trestles of varying heights stand in every room. The more energetic of the hangers frequently take their coats off, and carry pictures about themselves. Before a picture is finally hung, it is usual for it to be "offered up," as it is termed—*i.e.*, held up temporarily to see how it looks in the place; generally two or more pictures of the same size are thus offered up before the Committee can decide which shall be placed. The whole work is not unlike the fitting together of a gigantic jig-saw puzzle, and though far more exciting, it is at times quite as irritating a performance.

One member is usually told off to arrange the water-colour room; as there are a great number of works, including the miniatures, in this department it takes nearly as long to finish this room as it would to hang four or five of the others. I have twice arranged the works in water-colour, and I confess I rather liked the job; the works are light and easy to handle, so that they can

be carried about and tried in various places, without the aid of a carpenter. The drawings that are to go upon the screens are all laid out upon the floor, and the size of the screen is marked in chalk so that the carpenter can fix the whole lot on the screen without any further trouble. As the men commence work at six in the morning a good hanger generally leaves over night a quantity of pictures in position, the numbers of which he charks on the walls to indicate the place where each has to go, so that when he arrives the next day he finds all of them fixed up.

Though the fatigue of hanging the pictures is considerable, the work has its charms, one of the greatest being the opportunity it affords of forming the most delightful and closest intimacy with your fellow hangers. The mixture of constant fun that goes on during the work also robs it of much of its fatigue.

The five hangers have lunch together in the Assembly Room, and I think I can truly say that I have never partaken of any mid-day repast at which I had better appetite and more delightful company than at these in Burlington House. The sweet familiarity of the Christian name was more the rule than the exception, the exception being often the alternation of some friendly nickname. When I was elected an Associate, and even after I had become an Academician, there were many old members living who had known my father well, and by all of them I was at once addressed as "George," and thus the use of the little familiarity became usual with



the majority of my fellow members from the first.

Among the numbers of well-loved comrades, with whom I have served on the Hanging Committee, who have passed away, there is none whose charming personality is perhaps more vividly impressed on my memory than that of George Richmond, the father of Sir William. His keen sense of humour, his appreciative knowledge of art, his endless store of anecdotes, and the geniality and quaintness of his manners rendered him the most delightful of companions. He displayed at times a certain amusing artfulness in getting his way, which endeared him to us all the more because his skill was covered by his playful good nature. He was quite celebrated for the taste which he displayed in the arrangement of the pictures on the walls, and he was nearly always chosen to serve on the Committees which had charge of the winter Exhibitions; his judgment and his knowledge of the early works of the Italian and Flemish Schools were of great service on these occasions, and room No. IV., where examples of these schools were usually exhibited, was always entrusted to his arrangement.

At the time when he served with me on the Council his strength and health were somewhat impaired, and this, although it in no way diminished his never-failing good humour and genial manners, rendered it necessary for him to use a wheeled chair in which he could pass from room to room without undue fatigue. The following account of the methods he pursued in hanging the room

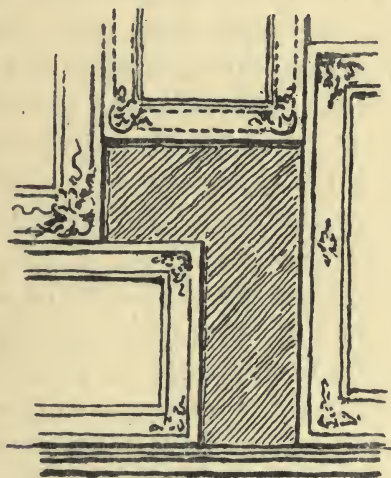


that was allotted to him will give my reader some idea of the sort of artfulness to which I have alluded to above.

In his chair he wheeled himself about through all the rooms accompanied by his two carpenters, selecting a great number of pictures that were to his liking and directing his men to carry them into his particular room. There were already in the room a few works by members, which the whole Committee had decided should be hung there, otherwise he had had all the other pictures that he possibly could cleared out of it. He occupied himself in collecting pictures for nearly two days. By making his selections thus early he obtained quite the pick of the works by the outsiders; as well as these he secured a great number of pretty little pictures, flower subjects, children's portraits, interiors, or any small-sized work of merit that he fancied, and these he wanted for the padding of the room. He got rather more pictures than he really wanted, but he would not allow any of them to be taken from his room by the other hangers. After this he proceeded with the arrangement of his walls, remaining in the room all the time.

He certainly succeeded in making his the most tastefully hung room in the whole Exhibition. He was particularly clever in overcoming the difficulties of what he used to call "the knight's move"; this term can be best understood by looking at the accompanying diagram, the space to be filled up being of the shape of a knight's move in chess. Richmond gave great

variety to his walls by breaking up the monotony of the large portraits and landscapes and inserting between and among them, smaller pictures of merit, with here and there a well painted flower subject. But, of course, he got by his ingenious method a choice stock of material to deal with.



*The Knight's Move.*

He finished his room rather quickly by this method, and we all admired it greatly and complimented him, but it was rather awkward for us afterwards, for when our walls were nearly finished, he would hand over to us the remainder of his selected pictures; among these might be some quite good accepted works, which he no longer wanted, and he used to express his hope that we should be able to find room for them.

Richmond was a great advocate for fresh air. If his room felt too hot and stuffy he would have the skylights opened. After he had finished

his lunch he would, if the weather were fine, go out into the quadrangle in front of the Academy and walk up and down on the sunny side. There was nothing I liked better than to join him at these times and enjoy his most delightful conversation.

Richmond had somewhat of a clerical or even archidiaconal appearance, partly owing to his black clothes and rather broad - brimmed, real beaver hat, and partly, I believe, from having painted portraits of so many eminent ecclesiastical dignitaries. He mixed well with the bishops at the Athenæum, of which club he was a most popular member.

Another remarkable Academician with whom I had the good fortune to serve several times on the Hanging Committee was J. C. Hook. He was possessed of extraordinary talents as an artist, and his works were thoroughly national and original, both in conception and execution. Moreover, his knowledge and love of nature were only equalled by his love and appreciation of the great works of the Old Masters. The increased space of the new building at Burlington House did not affect him, for he continued to the end to contribute the same number of works, usually four, of precisely the same moderate sizes, as those with which he made his reputation in Trafalgar Square. The Academy might well be proud of him as a fine example of its products, for his training commenced in its Schools in 1836 under the Keepership of Hilton at Somerset House, and had been consummated when he



gained the gold medal and travelling studentship in 1845-46. Sir John Millais gained the gold medal in 1847, and he and Hook became close friends in the Schools, and retained their mutual affection all their lives. One of the finest portraits that Sir John ever painted was that of Hook in his old age.

Hook besides his artistic gifts had the most varied and original parts. In politics he was like William Morris, somewhat of a socialist, and he also resembled Morris in his intense love of nature and his reverence for the heritage of beautiful works, left to us by former ages. Though a sincerely religious man he had a distinct prejudice against the clergy of the Church of England. He made no secret of his views, either of institutions or of people, speaking out strongly and fearlessly on any subject that interested him, and a very few days' intimacy with him on Council work revealed the inmost heart of the man to his associates. Thus his prejudice against the clergy disclosed itself directly a portrait of any dignitary of the church made its appearance before the selecting Council; I remember that even a little picture of a chorister boy once acted on him as a red rag acts on a bull.

I was greatly amused once when we were engaged with the hanging by coming suddenly upon Hook with four carpenters around him, to whom he was expounding the doctrines of his political creed. We could not refrain from laughing when we caught such words as, "I tell you



what, you men, you have the right, etc., etc." The temptation of seeing four working men in their shirt sleeves had been too much for him. Hook was not a very good hanger, perhaps because he was too impulsive and excitable; but he was matchless at the task of selection; truth to nature, sound workmanship, or purity of colour in any of the works that came before him never failed to catch his eye.

At his pretty abode, "Silverbeck," near the foot of the Hind-head in Surrey, all the best characteristics of the man were displayed. He was almost entirely supported by the produce of the ground he occupied. A little stream filled a millpond which worked a small mill, in which he ground the corn that he had grown himself. He ate mutton from his own sheep; he grew his own vegetables, and obtained poultry and eggs from a fine lot of brown breasted game fowls. He had a rough sea-built boat on his millpond, from which he could paint in the open air, his own sons and his gardener's young wife serving as occasional models. It was a striking sight to see him, a man over seventy years of age, on the top of his haystack, when his hay was being carried, working in his shirt sleeves with a pitchfork.

A farmer, who resided not very far from "Silverbeck," once told me that Hook in his farming hardly ever seemed to have a bad year. His principles were those of the Duke of Wellington, who said, "When a man wants a thing well done, let him do it himself."

Hook was very fond of babies. I remember his saying once that a house was not worth going into that had not got a baby and a barrel of beer on tap in it.

At the Academy Councils Hook invariably wore a suit of grey homespun, with a picturesque Basque cap on his head, and it is in this, his work-a-day costume, that Sir John painted him. He was always particularly fond of the younger members of the Academy, joining freely in all their gaiety and fun.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS—*continued*

BESIDES the two mentioned in the preceding chapter there are many other distinguished members of the Academy with whom it has been my good fortune to share in the work of the Council for the selection, and of the Committee for the arrangement of the pictures sent for the Exhibitions of the Academy, about whom I might here give some reminiscences ; etiquette, however, prevents me from doing so of many of them, for, happily, they are still alive, and of the others I shall have something to say later on. I shall therefore hasten on with what more I have to tell of the labours of the hanging Committee up to the completion of its work of arrangement.

There is in the laws of the Academy one that ensures that a sculptor and an architect shall always be present on the Council during the selection and arrangement of the works sent for exhibition, and, of course, it is to these two members, each in his respective branch of Art,

that the duty of the arrangement of the works of sculpture and of architecture is assigned. The sculptor, working alone as he does, is free from those differences of opinion that so frequently arise among the painters, and in this respect his lot is perhaps the happier, but, nevertheless, he finds it a very difficult task to place each important work in the position where it can be best seen and so that the light falls upon it from the right direction, and to preserve at the same time a well-balanced harmony in the general arrangement of the gallery. His room, whilst the work is going on, is so much encumbered by the numerous pieces of sculpture, from which he makes his selection, as well as by the carpentry and other work that goes on in it, that it is not until the last day of his arrangement, when a general clearance is made, that the whole effect can be properly seen.

Of the hanging of the architectural drawings there is nothing much to say. The system of hanging is very much the same as that adopted in the arrangement of the water-colour room. The architect who undertakes it generally finishes his work rather sooner than the painters do theirs.

Hanging the oil pictures is very fatiguing work; to walk about and hunt for pictures, and still worse to stand and watch the men, always proved a trial to me, and so one year I took a tricycle to the Academy, an old-fashioned one with a comfortable pan seat, on which I wheeled myself



along the alleys between the stacks of pictures from room to room quickly and easily; I used to mark the pictures which I selected, ride back to my room and send my men to fetch the pictures which I had marked. It was great fun getting up a good speed in negotiating the long straight alley running from the "Gem Room" through the sculpture gallery and the central vestibule to the end of the large room, but in doing this I once came to grief over a box of screws. I lent my machine to my fellow hangers at times when they were weary, and Hook was particularly fond of riding it.

In the "Notice to Artists" that is inserted yearly in the catalogues of the Academy there is one that cautions the exhibitors against the use of wide frames with projecting mouldings, and on the strength of this notice the hangers, occasionally, out of kindness to an artist in order to secure a good place for his picture, take liberties with his frame. I once, on my own responsibility, had the outer mouldings of a frame taken off in order to be able to place a small picture, which I admired, in a very good place, level with the spectators' eye. On the varnishing day, however, the artist was quite angry with me. I did not like to tell him that his picture would never have been hung at all if I had not acted as I had done. Hook once got a carpenter to saw off about half an inch from the back moulding of the frame of a picture in order to be able to squeeze it into a good place. I never heard whether the artist thanked him for

doing it, but I think that he ought to have done so.

I recollect my father relating, with a certain amount of triumph, an incident that happened during the last time that he served on the Hanging Committee in 1852. Redgrave and Creswick, two newly-elected members, were his fellow hangers; these members, together with the President, Sir Charles Eastlake, and some others were at that time great admirers of the works of John Linnell. Linnell had many years previously withdrawn his name from the list of candidates for the Associateship, probably out of pique at not having been elected; he, nevertheless, continued to contribute regularly works of his to the annual Exhibitions; and it had been proposed, by his admirers amongst the members, to invite him to place his name once again on the candidate's list. My father opposed this motion, asserting it to be derogatory to the dignity of the institution, and it was eventually lost. The pictures contributed by Linnell were pronounced that year to be the finest he had ever exhibited, and my father, who was never a great admirer of Linnell's paintings, told his two fellow hangers to do whatever they liked with the pictures. They accordingly took the matter into their own hands and hung one which they considered the finest of the lot in a central position of great honour. At the close of the hanging, when the catalogue was being made up, it was discovered, to their great chagrin and my father's intense amusement, that the picture

that they had thus hung was not by Linnell himself, but by one of his two sons, who painted pictures closely resembling their father's works. My father would not hear of the picture being changed for one by the elder Linnell; indeed the sizes of the pictures and want of time would in themselves have prevented such a change, and so the son's work retained its position. Some of Linnell's earlier works are, in my opinion, very fine, but at the time I am writing about he had become extremely mannered in his colouring and execution.

It is customary on the last day, when the Exhibition is taken over from the Hanging Committee, for the whole Council to dine together, after which some business is transacted. These dinners are delightful, winding up the whole work in a most pleasant manner. The keeper gets up a subscription for the carpenters and porters, and we all part the best of friends. It is the eve, however, of the members' varnishing day, and some of us have misgivings and qualms as to the frowns and complaints that we are more than likely to receive from many of our fellow members on the morrow. Gratitude is the rarest of virtues, grumbling the commonest of vices; those whose pictures have been hung in centres think that they have only been treated as they deserve, whilst those whose works have not are but too apt to assign the cause to the jealousy or stupidity of some one of the hangers. The Council, however, holds itself well together on these occasions, taking, like boys at school, the



blame and responsibility in common, and scorning to disclose each other's individual workings. Disappointments and grievances very seldom lead to any serious bad feeling on these occasions, and one hears but little of them in the afternoon, for the conviviality that always attends the luncheon hour produces a marked brightening in the looks of every one.

On the outsiders' varnishing day the members of the Council attend, severally taking charge of the different rooms; as the carpenters are not allowed to tilt any picture or to do any other work at the request of an artist unless permission has first been obtained from a member of the Council. The outsiders generally seem pleased with the Council and the treatment they have received from it, and if their pictures are well hung they never fail to express their gratitude. At the same time the members of the Council compliment and congratulate those of the outsiders who have works of remarkable excellence on the walls. Indeed, I very seldom witnessed any ill-feeling expressed on these days between the outside exhibitors and the members.

The Tuesday before the Private View might be called "charwomans' day," for it is devoted to the brooms and pails of the cleaners. On the Wednesday the Exhibition is open to the writers in the Press. I went, by mistake, into the rooms on one of these days, and they presented a strange appearance; it looked as though the Exhibition had already been opened to the public, save for



the very scanty number of visitors. About forty or fifty people, the majority of whom appeared to be women, were wandering through the rooms with catalogues and pencils in their hands. They looked harmless enough, were very quiet, and scarcely ever spoke to one another.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS—*continued*

ON the day of the Royal Private View the entrance hall and staircase are decorated with flowers and red carpets for the reception of Royalty. Early in the afternoon His Majesty the King, accompanied by the Queen and some members of the Royal Family with the ladies and gentlemen in attendance, visits the Exhibition. They are received at the entrance by the President, the Secretary, and the members of the Council, who afterwards accompany them round the galleries. Tea is provided for the Royal party later in the afternoon in the large central room.

It was my fortune to be on the Council on the last occasion that His late Majesty King Edward visited the Academy. There appeared to be nothing that could possibly suggest the approaching sad calamity. The King seemed to me to be in his accustomed health and fine spirits, but the day was raw and cold, and I recollect seeing the Royal carriages being driven round and round the quadrangle to prevent the

horses from catching cold. It seemed, then, but a short time since I had been on the Council in 1901, when King Edward paid his first visit to the Academy after his accession to the throne. That was an informal visit in order to inspect the arrangement we had made for the exhibition of his mother's portrait, by Benjamin Constant, which was placed, by his express wish, by itself in the post of honour in the large room, with drapery round it. He suggested some slight alterations, and afterwards went round the rest of the Exhibition, although the hanging was scarcely then completed. I was particularly struck by the dignity in his bearing and manner on that occasion that marked him out at once as the "King"; for he differed in some indefinable way from the "Prince of Wales," whom we had known so long as our ever welcome guest at the annual banquet of the Royal Academy.

In old times the Sovereign used to be present at the Academy on the day of the Private View. George the Fourth, when Prince of Wales, is shown thus in Ramberg's plate, in the year 1781, attended by the President, Sir Joshua Reynolds. In a letter to his sister my father gives a long account of the visit, on the Private View day, of William the Fourth to the first Exhibition held in the new buildings in Trafalgar Square in the year 1836. He tells us how the King, dressed in a plain suit of deep mourning (he had recently lost his favourite daughter, Lady de Lisle), was received at the entrance of the Academy by the President, Sir Martin Shee, and the Council of

the Academy. He describes how Sir Martin presented the keys of the new building to the King, and how the King returned them to Sir Martin, saying that "he could not place them in better hands." My father remarks that it was lucky that the King did not try the keys, for they had only arrived that morning from Birmingham, and it had been found that they did not fit the locks.

From this letter it is interesting to learn that on the same day, after King William had departed, Queen Victoria (Princess Victoria as she then was) paid her first visit to the Royal Academy. The Exhibition rooms were filled by the ordinary visitors to the Private View when she arrived. The young Princess, my father says, was instantly the sole object of attention of everybody in the room. She talked with those she knew, and appeared in the best of health and spirits.<sup>1</sup>

In another letter to his sister, written in 1837, my father gives an account of the first visit after her accession to the throne that the young Queen paid to the Academy. She did not come in State; she was attended only by her mother, and by the Duchess of Sutherland, and a few other ladies in attendance. My father describes her as looking very pretty, and remarks "That none of the engravings that have been published do her anything like justice." Before leaving the Academy she was at her own request

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, "Autobiographical Recollections," C. R. Leslie, R.A. John Murray, 1860.



introduced by Sir Martin Shee to all of the Academicians that were present, saying a few words to each of them.

No regular Annual Reports were kept of the proceedings of the Academy in those days, and I cannot therefore be quite sure, but I am nearly certain, that during the whole time of Sir Charles Eastlake's Presidency, the Royal visits of the Queen were paid to the Academy on the day of the ordinary Private View. My father used often to take my elder sisters to the Private Views at that time, and I can well remember their talking of having seen the Queen on these occasions.

Dick Doyle in his "Journal" for the year 1840, written when he was a boy of fifteen, in the entry for 1st May gives a spirited little illustration of the arrival of the Queen and Prince Albert at the Royal Academy, on the day of the Private View, with the following account of the event.

"I went to see the Queen going to the Exhibition. I am so tired of seeing them that I would not have gone only that I had a sort of melancholy pleasure in going to linger about the door of the Academy pondering about what could be the subject of Maclise's large picture, besides there is always a something pleasant in seeing the crowd and hearing the yell. The bells of St Martin's had been ringing for an hour when five state carriages drove up emptied themselves on the pavement at the door of the National Gallery where they were received by Sir Martin Shee and forthwith carried upstairs; and certainly I

never envied the Queen so much as I did at that moment and for the next hour and a half. At all events Monday won't be long in coming, and then for the most glorious day of the year."

In this quotation the extreme interest that this boy of fifteen took in the Exhibition is very remarkably shown and to the present generation may seem incomprehensible. It is true he was already a pretty accomplished artist himself, but it is evidently the subject pictures, so much more abundant in those days, than now, that were to him the chief attraction; that this was so is still more apparent from some further extracts from his Diary, written after he had visited the Exhibition on the opening day.

"*Monday.* It has come at last, and at half-past-ten (which was a great deal too soon) James, Henry, and I set out for Trafalgar Square and arrived of course half an hour before the door was opened. There was a pretty considerable number of persons collected, and they were increasing in most rapid manner, so we stood in the doorway watching the clock and the different characters who came crowding up. Exactly at twelve the door burst open and in we rushed. . . . There were about fifty besides us in the first rush, almost in a body, and we had a desperate race. I don't know who won it, but Henry was third and I was fourth. I rushed straight down the rooms till I came to M'Clise's picture of Macbeth and then I stopped."

The little illustrations, of which by the kindness of Messrs Smith Elder & Co. I have been able to give reproductions, are very interesting,

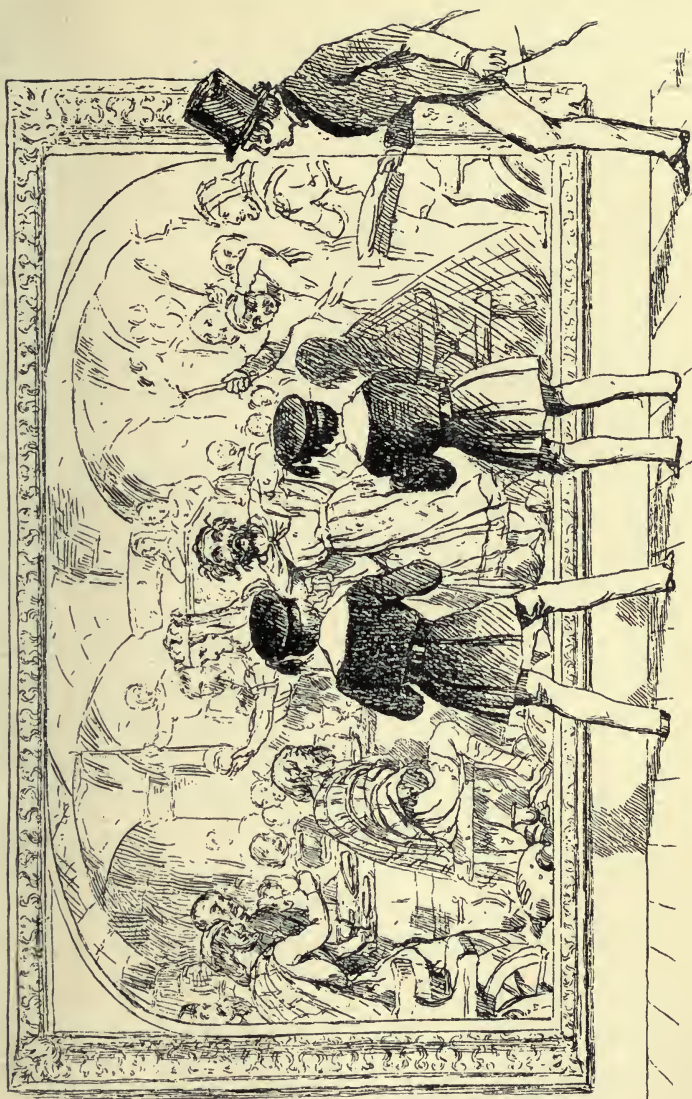
not only for their faithfulness in the representation of the scenes depicted, but for the costumes of the two boys which are identically the same in style as that worn by Sir John Millais, in 1840, when he first entered the Antique School of the Academy.

Dick Doyle goes on in the Diary to criticise the pictures with a discrimination and justice that does him much credit. He notices, among others, the works of Landseer, Etty, and my father.

If the Exhibitions have greatly altered in character since the time that Dick wrote his Diary, apparently the criticisms in the Press, that usually follow the opening of the Academy, have but very little changed. The time-honoured abuse to which the poor old institution has annually to submit from the experts in the press is thus alluded to by the boy. He is writing of *The Observer*, but his remarks hold good of most other journals of the time. This Sunday paper generally issues, a short time before the opening of the Academy, a list of the most important works which have been sent in for exhibition, and after quoting from this, Dick Doyle goes on to say:—

“There is nothing respecting the merits of them, only just the list, but they threaten to give a series of critiques during the season, and I anticipate some fun on the dreadful abuse they are sure to load on Landseer, Maclise and Wilkie. The person who writes the critiques in the *Observer* seems to have some peculiar pleasure in singling out some very little picture,





IN FRONT OF MACLISE'S PICTURE, 1840.

[To face p. 120.





rather near the ceiling, by some person never heard of, and praising it as decidedly the best in the Exhibition, and then follows a great attack on the Royal Academy for not putting it in the principal place."



"A TRANSPOSITION."

*From a letter of Dick Doyle's in the possession of C. R. L. Fletcher.*

John Doyle, well known as the artist of the celebrated H.B. caricatures, became acquainted with my father very shortly after Dick wrote this Diary, and Dick and his brothers, James and Henry, and his sister, Annette, became frequent visitors at our house. The whole family were

extremely clever and artistic, but Dick was far ahead of the others in the wit and originality of his imagination and ideas. The letters that he wrote to his friends had nearly always matchless little illustrations in them, similar in character to those which he introduced into his Diary. In a letter which he sent to one of my sisters there is an example of his quaint humour—a little pen and ink drawing of an Exhibition at the Academy in which the people are hung up on the walls and the pictures with catalogues in their hands coming to see them. In the same letter he remarks on a very diminutive friend of ours whom he saw at the Academy, “that as he was really not life-size, he ought only to be allowed to go into the miniature room.”

Henry Doyle became Director of the Irish National Gallery; Dick and all his brothers and his sister Annette are now dead. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is the son of Dick's youngest brother Charles, the only one of this family who ever married; him I seldom saw, as he resided in Edinburgh, where he was in business.

To return to the visits paid by Royalty to the Exhibitions of the Academy, perhaps the most remarkable, and certainly the most royal, of any that I ever witnessed, took place on the occasion of Queen Victoria's first jubilee, in the year 1887. On the evening of the 29th of June in that year, by express command of the Queen, the Exhibition rooms were opened and lit up for the reception of the very distinguished assemblage of Royal personages with their attendants who





DICK IN FRONT OF LANDSEER'S PICTURE.



THE RUSH ON THE OPENING DAY, 1840.





had come to England at that time to attend the grand celebrations of her Jubilee. Lord Leighton and the members of the Academy received their exalted guests about ten o'clock in the evening. The rooms were graced on that occasion by the presence of four European Kings—the King of Denmark, the King of Greece, the King of Saxony, and the King of the Belgians, and besides these there were also present the Crown Princess of Prussia (our Princess Royal), the Prince of Wales, and most of the other members of the Royal Family of England, together with a numerous following of lords and ladies and equeries in attendance. There were also Foreign Ambassadors and many other distinguished persons.

As there were so many crowned heads among the assembly, it was amusing to watch the numberless bows and curtsies that occurred continually amongst the throng; for every time that a King addressed one or another of the company a bow from a gentleman or a curtsy from a lady took place. The curtsies seemed to be given with a quick and sudden drop movement, reminding me very much of the bob that a float gives when a perch bites. It was the first and only time that I ever saw Lord Randolph Churchill, whom I was surprised to find a far taller man than I had imagined, having so long been accustomed to see him depicted in *Punch* as quite a small boy; as a matter of fact Lord Randolph was rather tall than otherwise.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS—*continued*

QUITE the most delightful and amusing of all the Royal visitors to the Academy that I remember was the Duchess of Teck, our present Queen's mother. She arrived on one occasion rather late in the afternoon, after the Prince of Wales and the rest of the Royal party had left. Sir Edward Poynter and myself were the only members of the Council present when she came, and we had the pleasure of escorting her through the rooms. She displayed a very keen appreciation of the merits and demerits of the various works, her remarks on them being extremely shrewd and accurate, and continually enlivened with witticisms. Later on I had the honour of pouring out her tea for her; she told me she remembered seeing my father when he was painting her elder sister, the Princess Augusta's portrait for his picture of "The Queen receiving the Sacrament," but I did not quite like to remind her what she did at one of the sittings. My father often related the circumstance how she, then quite a little girl with curls all

round her head, burst into the room where her sister, in a low cut dress, was sitting, and smacked her on the bare shoulders, out of mere fun, and then ran from the room again laughing.

Her brother, the late Duke of Cambridge, was a frequent and ever welcome guest at the annual banquets of the institution, on which occasions he usually replied for the toast of "The Army," in speeches remarkable for their manly common-sense. His geniality and good-natured, unaffected manners made him very popular with all the members of the Academy.

The hospitality of the Royal Academy, displayed at the annual banquets and in the entertainment of Royalty, was further extended in 1851 to all contributors to the Summer Exhibition. A "Conversazione," now known as "the Soirée," to which all the exhibitors are invited, was then established. The rooms are lit up and decorated for the occasion, and a band of music and refreshments are provided for the entertainment of the guests, who are received at the entrance by the President and the Council. It is largely attended by the exhibitors, the members, and many distinguished celebrities of the day who are specially invited by the Council.

On its first establishment the Soirée was held at the close of the Exhibiton, but later on it was thought desirable to change the date to some evening during the first week in July, one of the chief reasons for the change being that before the end of July so many artists, especially the landscape painters, usually leave town for the



country or to go abroad in search of subjects or backgrounds for future pictures. This change was found to be very acceptable to the artists, and the Soirée has been held during the first week in July nearly ever since.

The Exhibition closes on the evening of the August Bank Holiday, and a day or two afterwards the vans arrive to carry away the pictures to their various destinations. It is astonishing how very quickly the pictures are removed from the walls. By Tuesday evening nearly every one of them is down; they then descend gradually by the lift to the basement where they are stacked carefully in alphabetical order ready for removal. I trust I may be excused for paying here a little tribute to the memory of an old friend of mine, George Waghorn by name, more familiarly known as "Little George." His father had been foreman of the carpenters before him, and is represented in Mr Cope's picture of "The Selection of the Pictures," standing by the work which is before the Council, with a lump of chalk in his hand. Little George himself is in this picture as well; he is the red-haired carpenter examining one of the works that is nearing its ordeal on the stool. George was one of the ordinary carpenters when I first served on the Hanging Committee, and in that capacity displayed marked ability. On the death of his father he himself became foreman, and the Royal Academy without doubt never had a better or more efficient servant. I was particularly fond of him, and felt very grieved when I heard, about three years ago,

of his sudden death at the Academy whilst in the midst of his hardest work. He was most efficient during the hanging; he seemed to remember every picture that was accepted or rejected, and could find in the shortest possible time any that was wished for.

It is rather sad to have to mention that at the close of the Exhibitions many of the works that have been exhibited are never sent for; some remain in the vaults unclaimed for years. When the Academy was in Trafalgar Square, I remember there was quite a little collection of dingy pictures hanging in the porter's room, near the students' entrance, that had never been claimed; and these unclaimed works still accumulate from year to year. At a Council meeting during our present President's rule, we had a large collection of such works brought before us, and there was a great laugh when one of the unclaimed masterpieces, a water-colour drawing, turned out to be by the President himself, which he had entirely forgotten. Another one was by Sir William Orchardson, and there was an architectural drawing by Alfred Waterhouse, our Treasurer at that time. These pictures which had been forgotten by the absent-minded members were allowed by the Secretary to remain amongst the rest of the unclaimed, as a little joke; the President and the Treasurer were both present on the Council which had to decide as to the disposal of the unclaimed works. Sir William Orchardson was at times very forgetful about business matters. He once sold a rather im-

portant work to a picture dealer without receiving any payment for it, and the dealer unfortunately became bankrupt before the fact of non-payment returned to the distinguished artist's memory.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LORD LEIGHTON'S PRESIDENCY

DURING the Presidency of Lord Leighton a marked change gradually became manifest in the character of the annual Exhibitions at the Academy—a change principally observable in the gradual but distinct diminution of what artists term “subject pictures”; under this head may be classed those representing scenes from domestic or rural life, humorous pictures of various sorts, those in which strong dramatic situations or scenes of sentiment or love are depicted, and pictures with subjects taken from history or from the great dramatists or novelists. In such pictures great care was usually taken in representing the backgrounds, costumes, and accessories with archæological accuracy; the canvases were generally of moderate dimensions, and the figures introduced in them were always smaller than life.

It was a peculiarly *national* branch of the art, for though it probably owed its origin to the works of the Dutch School, its first introduction into England may be traced to such essentially British artists as Hogarth, Morland, Stothard, Smirke, James Ward, and Wheatley, followed



by such equally national artists as Wilkie, Mulready, Collins, C. R. Leslie, Webster, Maclise, and others. The works of the Pre-Raphaelites, as far as the subjects and sizes of the canvas were concerned, belonged to the same category, their style and technique being the chief difference between them and those of the figure painters of the School just mentioned.

During the early years of the nineteenth century these pictures received but scanty patronage; their prices were low, and the artists had to supplement their earnings either by painting small portraits or by devoting their talents to book illustration. Even with such supplementary aids my father had a hard struggle in the early part of his career to support his wife and family; later in life he was more successful in selling his works, and the prices he got for his pictures were much higher. Towards the end of Sir Martin Shee's Presidency several patrons distinguished themselves by forming large collections of landscapes and subject pictures by living British artists; among these collectors the names of Mr Vernon and Mr Sheepshanks are the best known. From that time the figure and landscape painters enjoyed more prosperous days; purchasers were found in abundance, the moderate size of the canvases was all in their favour, for it rendered the pictures easy to place on the walls of the collectors. With the general public these pictures were extremely popular; the receipts from the shillings taken at the doors of the Academy going up by leaps and bounds. Ruskin

was at the time at the zenith of his brilliancy, and devoted his most fervent energy to laudation of the works of the Pre-Raphaelites, although occasionally others of the subject painters came in for a share of his praise. Even the critics in the press began, as they say of babies, "to take notice." Visitors at the Private Views in those days really looked at the pictures as well as at each other. And altogether the artists had a famous time of it during the 'fifties and 'sixties.

Thinking that the good times had come to stay, numbers of successful painters who could afford it, and, sad to say, very many other artists who could not, bought houses with gardens attached to them, in St John's Wood, Kensington, Hampstead, and other suburban districts, where they built themselves large and luxuriously fitted studios; in these on "Show Sundays" they were visited by crowds of fashionable people, but on working days such artists at their easels, with their models, always seemed to me to be sadly out of scale with their spacious and magnificent surroundings. I can well remember, for example, John Pettie appearing to me as quite lost in his large studio. I suspect he must have felt something of this sort himself, for he had divided the place in half by a huge velvet curtain, hanging from ceiling to floor.

How far the removal, in 1869, of the Academy from Trafalgar Square to its present spacious abode at Burlington House had to do with it I cannot say, but certainly a few years after that event a gradual falling off in the annual output of

“subject pictures” was distinctly noticeable. Such paintings of this class as were still contributed were usually of far larger dimensions than those formerly sent, and possibly on this account they became less acceptable to private collectors.

Very shortly after the removal to Burlington, House, the rule prohibiting whole-length and life-sized half-length portraits from places on the so-called line was abolished, and as a result the landscape painters soon found out that works of theirs under six feet in length failed to attract attention on the walls. Large pictures became the general fashion, smaller ones being only placed, here and there, to fill up awkward gaps and corners. Room No. IX., the “Gem Room,” was henceforth the only room reserved for very small works. Some of the members themselves, however, were addicted to small canvases, and their works had to be accommodated in various ways on choice walls, and what are termed “little nests” were formed for them in some of the larger rooms.

Coincidentally with the invasion of the line by the life-sized portraits, the patronage hitherto given to subject-pictures began to fall off lamentably, and in consequence of this a great number of distinguished painters, who formerly produced important works of figure subjects, began to take to portraiture. Prominent among such painters were Millais, Holl, Orchardson, and Pettie. But numerous other examples of men who likewise did so may be found among members of the Academy who are still living. I should have



taken to portrait painting myself, but, unfortunately, I never could work well in harness, feeling miserable unless I have absolute freedom to choose my own models and my own subjects. There is still some patronage, though at a very moderate remuneration, for landscapes, and accordingly I have chiefly occupied my old age with that delightful branch of painting.

I have endeavoured above to give a few of the possible reasons for the gradual decrease in number of the subject-pictures in our annual Exhibition. There were, however, others as well, one, in my opinion, being the powerful influence which Lord Leighton possessed over the Councils of selection while he occupied the chair. He himself had little or no sympathy with works of this character, and although he undoubtedly maintained the most conscientious impartiality as a chairman, it was beyond even his marvellous powers of self-control entirely to conceal his opinion from the members of the Council.

On the Councils there are almost always one or two newly-elected members, men to whom the novelty of the work is rather bewildering, and who, under Leighton's Presidency could scarcely be expected to escape being carried away by the glamour of his voice and his enchanting personality. He said something, for or against, almost every work that came before him; his remarks were wonderfully acute and convincing. Even when he said nothing a slight shrug of the shoulders or an arching of the eyebrows would clearly indicate his opinion.



I well remember, on one occasion the look he gave me when I advocated, rather earnestly, the cause of a small subject-picture, which he himself probably despised; it was a look which said, as plainly as words could have done, "My dear George, you don't really mean to say that you admire that!" As a matter of fact, Leighton's untiring energy, his high ideals, his acute perception, and his endearing manners, gave him an almost overwhelming power during the annual selections of the pictures. The Councils on these occasions lost to a certain extent their ever-changing individualities, but in my opinion such change was a most valuable characteristic of the old Academy Council, ensuring as it did to every taste and style a fair chance at least at one time or another. Leighton never seemed to me quite to trust his Councils, or, for the matter of that, his Hanging Committees. Even when the latter had commenced its work, he would appear every day at tea-time, just on a pleasant friendly visit to hear how things were going on. He would afterwards walk rapidly through each room, casting watchful glances on every wall. His geniality on these little visits was absolutely charming, his natural sense of propriety and etiquette being far too strong to allow a single word of criticism or disapproval to escape his lips, but somehow one could not help feeling more or less as a school boy feels on the sudden appearance of a schoolmaster.

Now and then Leighton would have to endure a Council composed entirely of veterans, many

of whom entertained rather strong conservative views on art, or a Council on which three or four stubborn Scots had seats; on such occasions he had rather a bad time of it. I well remember a varnishing day, in a year when the Hanging Committee had had a majority of Scots on it, the shrugs of the shoulders and raising of the eyebrows with which the President indicated his feelings to those amongst the members who were most in sympathy with his own ideas. In all other respects Leighton fulfilled his duties on the selection Councils with consummate skill and tact, alert and attentive to every remark that was made by the members on either side of him, entering heartily into the talk and fun that went on, and pouring peace-restoring oil on the waters if ever they became ruffled by heated disputations. I remember how he on one occasion not only imposed on the carpenters but on the entire Council as well, in a playful way that was very effective. There are sent every year for exhibition a dozen or more representations, either in oil or in water-colour, of that picturesque Yorkshire sea - port, Whitby. A piteous little painting of this place came before us in the course of the day, and the President leaning forward gazed at it apparently lost in admiration, exclaiming, "Ah! Whitby—what a place that must be! I really must go some day—and see it." There was a dead pause. The carpenters stood in rapt attention, the Council silently wondering at the enchantment the little work appeared to have for him, when he quite suddenly recovered himself, crying

sharply to the carpenters, "Take it away, take it away, what on earth are you waiting for?" whereupon the poor thing was duly crossed and dismissed. Leighton's punctuality was wonderful; during the whole of the eighteen years of his Presidency I believe he never once kept a Council or a General Assembly waiting a single minute.

The gradual denationalisation which is so observable in the character of the works of the British artists of the present day undoubtedly originated during Leighton's Presidency, and, though most probably my opinion is not shared by younger artists, I cannot help feeling the change is much to be deplored. In no country yet has any School of Art in which the works produced have not been strongly imbued with national character and originality, risen to greatness, and at times a feeling of regret comes over me that at Sir Francis Grant's death Millais instead of Leighton was not elected to fill the vacant chair.

It seems hard that the great leader of the pre-Raphaelite movement, who had done so much to revivify our national School of Art, should have been denied the opportunity, as President, of using his influence in the completion and establishment of the good work that he had initiated in our Exhibitions and Schools. He was, at the time, appreciated and esteemed by his colleagues, and looked up to and adored by the rising generation of the artists of the day, and would unquestionably have fulfilled the duties of the office with remarkable ability. But fate



had ordained it otherwise. Just as his influence was extending itself in every direction another great leader suddenly appeared in our midst, so marvellously accomplished and so obviously fitted in every respect for the office of President that when the vacancy occurred it was not surprising that, forgetful of the claims of the other, the members of the Academy should have unanimously elected him as their President.

The choice lay, however, between a native and a foreign product, for brilliant and superb as the "article" chosen was, it cannot be denied that it was nevertheless one that had been "made in Germany."



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE VARNISHING DAYS

OF the many privileges that an artist derives from his election to the Associateship of the Royal Academy none affords him, in my opinion, more unalloyed pleasure than that of attending the three varnishing days which are reserved for members of the institution. They are nearly the only occasions on which the Academicians and Associates meet altogether in perfect freedom and equality. It is true that on an election night the Associates and members meet one another, but the business of the evening is then a serious one, and there is very little time for friendly intercourse. Many of them have also opportunities of meeting one another at the social gatherings of the "Academy Club," but on these occasions, strangers are generally present, besides which only a comparatively small number of the members attend these gatherings, some of them not even being members of the club.

There have been at various times Academicians whose "scrupulosity" has led them to propose the abolition of these privileged days. When an

attempt was made to give effect to their scruples during the earlier period of his career, Turner expressed his fixed determination to resign his membership if the change were made; and it was mainly owing to his objection that the motion was withdrawn.

“The Royal Academy was, Turner used to say, ‘his mother,’ and on the varnishing days before the Exhibitions, he perpetrated nearly all the jovial sayings and doings which are recorded of him. He dearly loved a social meeting of his brother artists, and in fact left money in his will to provide an annual dinner.”<sup>1</sup>

Turner died in 1851 during the Presidency of Sir Charles Eastlake, and in the following year the privilege of the members' varnishing days was actually abolished. But the change was not a success, the surrender of the privilege was of no advantage at all to the “outsiders” (for it was one that they had never possessed), and it was soon found to be extremely unpopular with the members. A sort of compromise was effected, one day for varnishing being granted to all contributors to the Exhibition, whilst the privilege of the three days was restored to the members, and so it has remained ever since.

Though the enemies of the Academy, no doubt, regard the reservation of the three days to the members as an act of selfishness on their part, there are certain benefits which the

<sup>1</sup> “Hist. of Acad.,” F. A. Eaton and T. E. Hodgson, p. 221.

“outsiders” derive from it which perhaps are not duly considered. And the most important of these is the opportunity which the members have on these days of talking over the merits or deficiencies of the works of the more prominent outside exhibitors with a view to their future election to the Associateship of the Academy.

Many members other than those on the Council go on the Monday to the outsider’s varnishing day on purpose to make the acquaintance of those artists with whose works they may have been struck. On the morning of the first varnishing day numbers of the members may be found, at the table in the hall, writing off kindly letters to their friends amongst the outsiders to relieve them from suspense as to the fate of their pictures.

If these three days were to be open to all exhibitors alike, whether members or outsiders, all the charm and usefulness that at present characterise them would be entirely lost. Friendly intercourse between the members would cease, and freedom in the utterance of their opinions to one another would be rendered impossible.

I have been present at one hundred and twelve of these delightful gatherings, for I was elected an Associate in 1868, and at the very lowest estimate have attended an average of two and a half of them every year since, and I can truly say that they are amongst the very happiest days I have spent in the whole course of my long and not unhappy life.

I suppose there are no artists now living, except



J. M. W. TURNER, 1816.

*From a sketch by C. R. Leslie, R.A.*



myself, who were ever present at any varnishing days in the 'forties, and when I tell any one that I have seen Turner himself painting on his pictures on several such occasions, I am scarcely believed. But in former times Academicians were allowed to take with them, on varnishing days, some one to act as their assistant; to wash their brushes for them, to carry their paint boxes, to go out to get them anything they might require, or anything they might have left at home. And many of those who had sons would take one of them with them in the place of such an assistant. Thus it was that I got, on one or two occasions, admission to the Academy on varnishing days when I was still but a small boy. My father would take one of my elder brothers on one day and me on another, and I need not say that it was to me a treat indeed—a treat never to be forgotten.

I knew a great number of the members very well in those days from having met them often enough at my father's house, and amongst others, Alfred and John Chalon, Stanfield, David Roberts, Edwin and Charles Landseer, Uwins, Collins, Cockerell, Wyon, and Maclise; so that I did not feel entirely amongst strangers. Once or twice I sat at lunch with the members themselves, and at other times Mrs Braybrook, the housekeeper at the Academy, would give me some lunch in her room.

As far as the fun and friendly chaff are concerned a varnishing day in the 'forties was extremely like a varnishing day in the twentieth

century, the differences being chiefly in the hanging of the pictures, the lesser number of rooms, and the fact that no smoking was then allowed. As to the members, though their costumes were different, they were precisely the same jolly kind of good fellows as those of the present day, and behaved almost identically in the same free and friendly way, addressing each other by their Christian names or else by some well known nick-name.

My father also took me several times to Turner's studio in Queen Anne Street, which I recall as a lofty, dimly-lit room, very dusty, with numerous pictures stacked round, faces to the walls, and, in an adjoining anteroom, one upon an easel that Turner wished to show to my father; there was also on a shelf a row of fat glass bottles, closed by bungs, with brilliant colours in powder inside them. These most likely contained orange and yellow chrome, orpiment, emerald green, red lead, or other pernicious pigments which the great genius delighted in and recklessly employed. I saw these bottles once again, after more than fifty years, in the possession of Turner's great-nephew, at his house in Bayswater.

The only occasion I remember of Turner's visiting at my father's house was in 1850, the year before he died. My father took a great deal of interest in the election of Sir Charles Eastlake to the Presidency, and he invited several members to his house in order to discuss the subject, among others, I remember, the two

Chalons, Mr Hardwick, the Treasurer, and Turner; the latter was full of spirits on the evening, and apparently in his usual good health. He quite won the hearts of my two sisters, pretty girls of twenty-two and twenty at the time, flirting with them in his queer way, and drinking with great enjoyment the glass of hot grog which one of them mixed for him. He always had the indescribable charm of the sailor both in appearance and manners; his large grey eyes were those of a man long accustomed to looking straight at the face of nature through fair and foul weather alike.

The first time I met him was in the year 1844 at the Academy on one of the varnishing days. I am enabled to fix the date because of the picture he exhibited that year, which was that entitled "Rain, Steam and Speed." I watched him working on this picture. He used rather short brushes, a very messy palette, and, standing very close up to the canvas, appeared to paint with his eyes and nose as well as his hand. Of course he repeatedly walked back to study the effect. Turner must, I think, have been fond of boys, for he did not seem to mind my looking on at him; on the contrary, he talked to me every now and then, and pointed out the little hare running for its life in front of the locomotive on the viaduct. This hare, and not the train, I have no doubt he intended to represent the "Speed" of his title; the word must have been in his mind when he was painting the hare, for close to it, on the plain below



the viaduct, he introduced the figure of a man ploughing, "Speed the plough" (the name of an old country dance) probably passing through his brain.<sup>1</sup>

I think it was on this varnishing day that I lunched with the members in the Council room, for I remember sitting between my father and Turner at the table, and the latter, who had got on very good terms with me by then, helped me to slices of tongue and made me feel quite at home. I was only nine years old at the time, and of course could not understand all the jokes and fun that went on, but I very well remember that Turner held his own in it all uncommonly well. I was present at one or two other of these varnishing days, probably in 1845 and 1846, certainly in 1847, for on that year I well remember seeing Etty on a huge scaffold at work on his large triptych of "Joan of Arc," which hung in the centre above the line in the East Room.

Etty, as I remember him, was short and stout, with rather a large head, dressed in a frock coat tightly buttoned, and close-fitting trousers, a costume often seen in the illustrations to Dickens's earlier novels.

Turner in these years exhibited the wild pictures of his latest period, with mysterious quotations in the catalogue from "The Fallacies of Hope." No idea can now be formed from these pictures in the National Collection of the

<sup>1</sup> This picture is now in the Tate Gallery.



intensely brilliant effect that they possessed when first exhibited. Turner went about from one to another of them on the varnishing days piling on, mostly with the knife, all the brightest pigments he could lay his hands on, chromes, emerald green, vermilion, etc., until they literally blazed with light and colour. They looked more like some of the transformation scenes at the pantomimes than anything else. Artists used to dread having their pictures hung next to them, saying that it was as bad as being hung beside an open window. They caught your eye the instant you entered the room. They were certainly most lovely and brilliant effects of colour, but their meaning and the subjects were entirely unintelligible. At the present time, though their unintelligibility remains, their radiant tints have long departed, and, in my opinion, they might just as well be burnt. Turner used to send these pictures into the Academy with only a delicate effect, almost in monochrome, laid on the canvas, and very beautiful they looked, often like milky ghosts. They had probably been painted for some time, as they were quite dry and hard; all the bright colour was loaded on afterwards, the pictures gradually growing stronger in effect and colour during the three varnishing days.

I believe that Turner had for a long time been in the habit of preparing works for future exhibition, laying in, with simple colours, the effect and composition, painting them solidly and very quickly with considerable *impasto*, and

allowing the whole to dry and harden together. He would use no fugitive pigments in these preparations, contenting himself with the ochres, siennas, and earth browns, with real ultramarine, black, and a very liberal allowance of white. He must, I think, have had many works thus commenced laid by in his studio, from which he would take one, from time to time, to send to the Academy for exhibition. I have formed this opinion from having seen the remarkable series of Turner's works that were recently discovered and since hung in the National Collection. The preservation of these pictures is remarkable, and I have a very strong conviction that they were probably painted very quickly. Perhaps any one of them represents little more than a day's work. That the safest and simplest pigments alone were used, accounts for their good preservation, their mellow tone being merely the effect of time. If I am right in my conjecture, we ought to be thankful that they were never exhibited, for, if this had been the case, they would, most likely, have by this time been ruined through the deleterious pigments with which he would have overlaid them on the varnishing days.

Turner is reported, and I believe with truth, to have worked not only on his own pictures on the varnishing days, but occasionally on those that hung next to his. It is said that he was once discovered, by a fellow - member, rubbing tone over a small picture that was above one of his own, and on being asked if that were his picture he was working on, he replied, "No,

but it is spoiling mine." Most probably the toning was put on with water-colour only, for he would hardly have been so unjust as to use oil. Yet Turner was, as Voltaire said of the prophet Habakkuk, "*capable de tout.*"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

AFTER Turner, I think Maclise, and the pictures he exhibited in the 'forties, remain most vividly impressed upon my mind. His tall figure, handsome face (of rather a peculiar type), and his simple genial manners, rendered him very conspicuous among the other members on a varnishing day. Like Dick Doyle, as a boy, I was greatly attracted by his pictures; for even when quite young I was extremely fascinated by anything that had to do with knights and armour, and afterwards, when a student of the Academy, I made drawings from almost every suit of armour in the Tower, so it can easily be imagined how much I delighted in Maclise's romantic representations of mediæval history. I remember very distinctly his picture called "The Ordeal by Touch," exhibited in the year 1846. It was a weird subject, the body of a murdered man bleeding afresh at the touch of his murderer. Maclise made a fine dramatic scene of it; the large canvas was filled with priests and monks and men in armour; the corpse formed a long



horizontal line in the centre, the suspected culprit standing at its head, with averted face, stretching out his hand to the wound. I have never seen the picture since, but I should much like to see it. I do not know whither all these large pictures by Maclise have gone. Except the "Hamlet" in the National Collection, I have never come across any of those that I remember so well when they were exhibited.

It must have been in 1847 that on one of the varnishing days I first made the acquaintance of Mr Herbert. He was elected a Royal Academician in 1846, and, as he first served on the Council in 1847, it was no doubt in that year that my father took me up into the dome of the Academy to see him at work on his picture, which had been taken up there. Herbert was a confirmed smoker, and as he stated that he could not work well without a cigar in his mouth, the Council had allowed him to have his picture removed to the dome. I rather suspect that his real reasons for asking for this removal were to obtain the good light that the dome afforded, and the quiet privacy of the place. Herbert's hair was red, long, and very smoothly brushed straight down; and he had quite a mediæval look both in appearance and dress. The picture on which he was at work represented Our Lord as a boy, outside the carpenter's shed at Nazareth, carrying in his arms a basket containing long chips of wood, two of which have fallen on the ground in the form of a cross at which he turns and gazes. The picture seemed

to me then very imaginative and finely conceived, and I remember that my father thought very highly of it. It was exhibited two years before Sir John Millais painted his celebrated picture of "The Carpenter's Shop," and I fancy that this picture of Herbert's must have had something to do with Millais's choice of subject. Herbert's early works were full of fine sentiment and were remarkable for their severe and accurate drawing and finish. His picture of "Sir Thomas More and his Daughter" has, ever since it was painted, retained the admiration of all really good judges of art.

The pictures by Dyce, as well as those by Herbert that were exhibited in the later 'forties, show the influence that the early works of the Florentine School were obtaining over the minds of the rising generation of the English School at that period, an influence which was far more marked in the earliest works of the pre-Raphaelites. The pre-Raphaelites, however, very soon developed greater freedom of style and a technique of their own, which distinguish them at once from the works of Dyce or Herbert.

Amongst other Academicians contemporary with my father, whom I met at these early varnishing days, there are none whose charming personalities are more vividly impressed on my memory than those of Clarkson Stanfield and David Roberts. These two men had, when young, worked together at scene-painting at Drury Lane theatre, and they retained throughout their lives the breadth and facility of brush-power that may

be acquired by that delightful branch of the art, as well as their own warm mutual friendship.

Stanfield was one of my father's greatest friends, and many a time have I walked with my father across the fields to see him at his house at Hampstead. The great attractions to me of these visits were some suits of armour and a fine collection of models of ships and boats which Stanfield possessed. Stanfield with the two Chalons and others were members of "the Sketching Club" and came often to our house when the Club met there. Stanfield was very kind to me on many occasions, lending me, at one time, a small fifteenth-century suit of armour from which to make studies for one of my pictures.

When my father died in 1859, Stanfield wrote me a beautiful letter of condolence, which I have kept among my most cherished autographs. He had, like Turner, much of the charm of the sailor both in face and manner; his hair was brown and very curly. All his brother members called him "Stanny," and without doubt all loved him.

David Roberts, likewise a warm friend of my father's, had a particular claim to my affection by the wish he expressed when I was a child to adopt me as his son. My father was not at the time well off, and had other five children; the proposal was made quite seriously, but I am happy to say that it was not accepted, though I feel quite sure that David Roberts would have been the kindest of fathers to me, and it



made me somehow love the dear old Scot as long as he lived. Both Stanfield and Roberts worked much on their pictures on the varnishing days, and, after Turner, were perhaps the most remarkable for their joviality and fun on these occasions.

There were one or two members at that time of whom I can recall little save their bald heads and the tone of their voices. Sir William Ross, the miniature painter, was one of these; he had a very clean bald head fringed with pure white hair, his voice was extremely bland and sweet, and his manners were innocent as those of a child. Then there was Thomas Uwins, the Librarian, very bald indeed; he was also a member of the above-mentioned Sketching Club. But perhaps the baldest of them all was William Wyon, who designed for the Royal Mint; his head was absolutely like the proverbial billiard ball. It was at Wyon's house that my father first made acquaintance with Millais, who was little more than seventeen years old at the time.

It was in 1860 that I first met that erratic genius "Jimmy" Whistler. His picture called "At the Piano" was that year hung in a first-rate place on the line in what was called the North Room. I had two pictures myself in that room, and there it was that my old fellow-student, H.S. Marks, introduced me to him. He had exhibited in the Academy the year before, but I do not know what work it was.

His picture of the two girls at the piano was greatly admired by all my friends among the young



artists of that time, and by John Philip, who in that year was serving on his first Council as a newly-elected Academician, and was consequently one of the hangers. Philip had acquired, from his long residence in Spain, a very intimate knowledge of the works of Velasquez, and, no doubt, recognised the mastery that Whistler possessed in the treatment of the blacks and greys in his work. It is a quality in which Whistler always appeared to me to approach nearer to the great Spaniard than any other painter of modern times. Philip liked this picture so much that he purchased it for himself.

It cannot possibly be said that Whistler ever received bad treatment at the hands of the Academy. He exhibited a large number of paintings and etchings in eleven different years, between 1859 and 1878, and his works were always well hung. No doubt some of the older members, with conventional views of art, were blind to his merits, but so were almost all the critics of the time, including Ruskin himself; but, thanks to the ever-changing nature of the Academy Councils, there are always one or two men found upon them whose healthy convictions on art will eventually prevail. Thus it was in 1872, with regard to the hanging of Whistler's fine portrait of his mother, over which there was a considerable fight among the members of the Hanging Committee. Sir William Boxall, according to the others, had hung this work in too good a place, but he declared that if it were removed, he would take down one of his own

pictures and place Whistler's in its stead. I am glad to say, for the honour of the Academy, that Sir William gained the day, the picture remaining in the centre where he had placed it.

Between the years 1860 and 1880 I met Whistler continually; he was very friendly with me at all times, and I never heard him make any complaints or say anything against the Academy at any time, and he was by no means the sort of person that could conceal his grievances. On the other hand, his ceaseless hostility to the art-critics was most remarkable; he regarded them as his natural prey, and on the last occasion that I remember meeting him he was extremely jubilant on having just "taken another scalp" (his term for the exposure of a blunder in a press criticism) by means of one of those letters which he was so fond in those days of sending to *The World*.

Two elderly female cousins of mine, Americans, who were at one time staying with me, had known Whistler's relatives in Virginia, and were very anxious to see him. I accordingly gave them a letter of introduction, and in due course they called on him. I was rather afraid that he would be bored by them, as they were great talkers, and when I met him shortly afterwards, I began apologising for having sent them to him; but to my surprise he spoke of the great pleasure their visit had given him, saying that he had marked the day with a white stone, as he had not seen any of that sort of dear old American lady for years, and had begun to think that the

breed was extinct. They, too, were quite charmed with him and with the kindness he showed to them.

I was present at the outsiders' varnishing days from 1860 to 1868, the year I was elected an Associate. Of course on these days we outsiders were very much on our good behaviour, seldom indulging in hilarity or freedom of conversation. The members, too, who were present, kept up a certain amount of dignity and restraint in their manners towards us; but they were very pleasant days nevertheless, for pictures sold well at that time, and almost every one was in good spirits. Yet I remember little remarkable in those years, the last in which the Exhibitions were held in the Trafalgar Square buildings, with the exception of a curious circumstance in connection with one of Mr Watts's pictures. Watts being too ill to attend the varnishing day himself, had asked Val Prinsep to look at his picture (I cannot recall the subject of it) and to use his discretion in varnishing it or not. Val consulted me about it, and I, in spite of always having some prejudice against varnish, thought that the picture looked dry and rather dirty, as though it had been lying by in the studio for some time, so I suggested that we should just wash it with a clean sponge and water—a process that would be absolutely harmless with any oil painting. Val seemed to think this quite the best thing to do; but to our astonishment the first wipe of the sponge took off a lot of brownish toning, leaving the colour beneath brighter and stronger. We both agreed

that there was nothing to be done but to go on and clean the whole, and I confess that I thought that the picture was greatly improved. I have no doubt that Watts, who was extremely fond of trying experiments to get quality in his surfaces, must have gone over this picture with water-colour toning of some sort. Watts never discovered what we had done; he probably only thought that the light in the Exhibition Room was too strong and searching, or he may even have forgotten ever having toned his work.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

WHEN an artist has been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, he is admitted to participate in all the privileges, excitements, and jovialities of the three varnishing days on perfectly equal terms with the Royal Academicians themselves. It was my luck to experience for the first time the delights of this privilege on the very last year that the Exhibition was held in the old rooms in Trafalgar Square.

My first feelings on this occasion were something like those of the "Ugly Duckling," when he was finally saluted and recognised by the swans as one of themselves. Amongst the members present in the rooms were many of my father's old friends whom I knew personally, and others whom I remembered as having taught as Visitors in the Schools when I was a student. There were also the younger ones who had sprung into fame and Academic honours quite recently. It seemed so extraordinary to find oneself amongst them, greeted and welcomed by one after another in the kindest manner. Moreover, the whole gathering seemed to be on such

friendly terms as rather surprised me, for I knew well that among them there existed a considerable amount of difference of opinion as to the various styles of art then in vogue. But even before they had had their lunch together, so far as I could see, they were all friendly enough, the Lions lying down with the Lambs quite amicably. It took me some time to get over the feeling of excitement at finding myself in their midst; "Et ego in Arcadia." I have been at many, many happy varnishing days since then, but none ever quite equalled the delight of these three first.

To me one of the most interesting of my father's old friends was the much-loved Daniel Maclise. He had served on his first Council in 1841, and in 1868 he served on his last, for he died two years afterwards. His works certainly gave delight and pleasure to thousands of the visitors to the Exhibitions of the Academy in the 'forties and 'fifties. And how much do we, and how much will posterity, owe to him for the individuality and fidelity of the wonderfully characteristic series of portraits which he executed for *Frazer's Magazine*! The man, too, himself was so lovable and original, possessing all the charms of a well-bred Irishman combined with a certain simplicity of manner that was essentially his own.

Charles West Cope and Richard Redgrave were also two Academicians that I had previously known as old personal friends of my father; of both he always spoke with respect and esteem

for the interest they took in the welfare of the Institution and in the business of the administration of its funds. Cope held the appointment of Trustee of the Royal Academy for many years after I became a full member, and I had frequent opportunities of witnessing the care and attention which both he and Redgrave bestowed on the conduct of the business of the Academy at its General Assemblies and Councils; he spared no effort to maintain strict legality in the proceedings, and ever kept a watchful eye on the expenditure.

Artists are not as a rule good business men; in the conduct of financial or legal affairs they frequently show both ignorance and apathy, but occasionally men are found who combine the artistic with the administrative faculties, and to such able and loyal members as Sir Martin Shee, Sir Francis Chantrey, Richard Redgrave, Charles Cope, and later on Henry Tanworth Wells, the Royal Academy is greatly indebted for the attention they bestowed on its laws and its finances.

Redgrave with my father and Mulready were among the first of the Academicians to recognise the merits and sincerity of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Redgrave, in his later works, which were landscapes, mostly painted out of doors from the scenery near his house at Abinger, showed to a considerable degree the influence that the works of the rising school had obtained over him.

On the varnishing day in 1868 I renewed



my acquaintance with Herbert, my first introduction to whom, in the dome of the buildings in Trafalgar Square in 1847, I have related in a previous chapter. He had not then, however, adopted that strange affectation of always speaking with a French pronunciation which eventually became a confirmed habit with him, and gave rise to many witticisms from his fellow members—one of the cleverest of which was said by Charles Landseer concerning Herbert's return from a visit to Egypt and Mount Sinai, "I suppose that he will speak Gum Arabic when he comes home again."

Apart from this affectation of a foreign pronunciation in his speech Herbert possessed a marvellous power in the apposite selection of the words he used in a debate at a General Assembly, or in the criticisms he delivered on a work of art. For instance, of the figure of Christ in Michael Angelo's last judgment, he said, "It is not our Lord, it is a convulsed Jupiter."

Herbert lived, at one time, nearly opposite Sir Edwin Landseer's house in the St John's Wood Road, and I frequently met him there in Sir Edwin's billiard-room. No two men could have been found more unlike one another, either in appearance or character, and yet they got on remarkably well together. Herbert, I think, admired Landseer's fine manners and bearing, and Sir Edwin, as well as being greatly amused by Herbert's quaint assumption of foreign ways, fully appreciated his shrewd intelligence.



An instance of, what I might call, the picturesqueness of his language is afforded by an invitation he once gave me to go and see the new house he had built for himself in West End Lane. "Come next Wednesday morning—I will give you breakfast—but no—the Wednesday after—then it will no longer be the little red herring." The "next Wednesday" was in Holy Week, and Herbert was a strict Roman Catholic. I went on "the Wednesday after," but I took the precaution of having breakfast before I left home, for Herbert was at times very absent-minded.

Sir Edwin Landseer never came to the varnishing days after I became an Associate; he may possibly have given a look in during some afternoon, but I have certainly no recollection of seeing him there. He was failing in health at that time, and extremely nervous; and even when well he was so sensitive that he could never paint while any one stood behind him looking on. His pictures were sent in covered over with a cloth, remaining so covered during the three varnishing days. I went with him, however, in 1870, very early in the morning of the Royal private view day. His picture of the Queen and Prince Albert in the Highlands, which had been already exhibited in an unfinished state by Royal command, in 1854, and upon which he had since worked and made considerable alterations, was that year again exhibited. At the Queen's special wish he had been allowed to keep the picture at home until the last possible

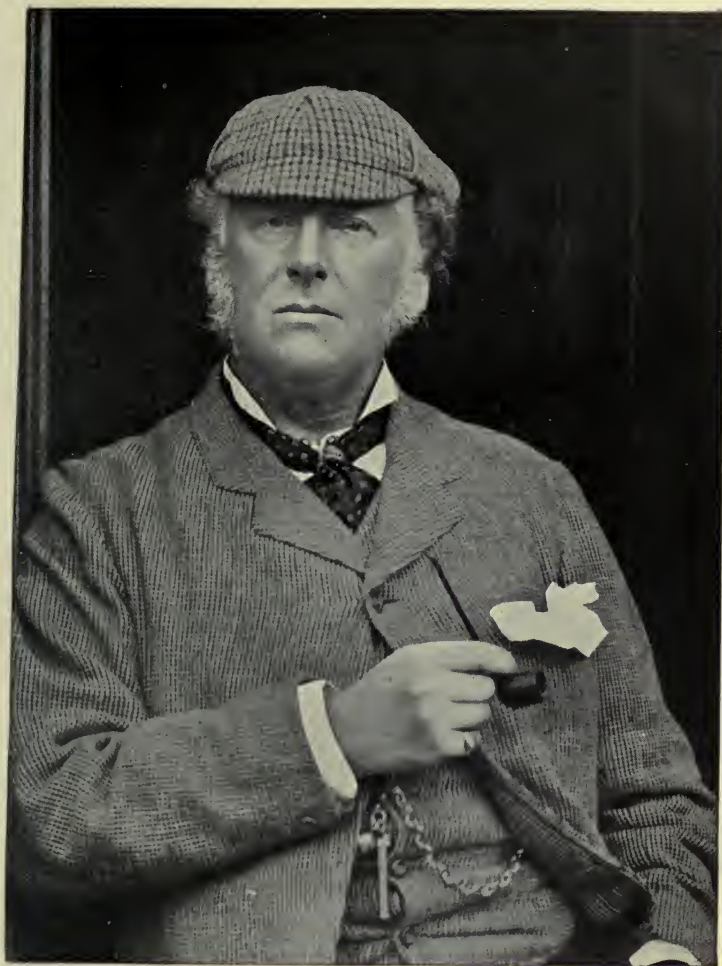
moment. The empty frame was sent in with a cloth over it, but the picture only arrived quite early on the morning of the Royal private view day; and when we came it was still covered. Mr Pickersgill, the Keeper, and I stood by it, while Landseer himself stood at the opposite side of the room, and at a signal from him we removed the cloth. Landseer gave one look at it, and with a shudder almost immediately left the room. The picture was a failure, and he knew it. For sixteen years this picture had been haunting Sir Edwin's studio. It was far finer in every respect when first exhibited, in the unfinished state, in 1854. I feel sure that the worry and trouble it had given him during those sixteen years did more than anything else to hasten the breakdown of his health, which ended in his death in 1873. And yet people continually remark, "What a delightful occupation painting must be!"

In 1868 Sir John Millais was in what might be called the transitional period of his career. Power in draughtsmanship he attained early in life, and retained to the last. He had a wonderfully correct eye; no one ever excelled him in the truth of balance with which he placed a head on the neck and shoulders. But he was gradually abandoning the laborious and somewhat cramping technique of his earlier style in order to secure those fleeting effects in nature, which are ever the most beautiful. For this object he felt that a greater rapidity of execution was necessary, and it was about this time that

he begun to develop his superb command over the *swordsmanship* of the brush which culminated in 1876 in that marvellous *tour de force*, "The Yeoman of the Guard." In 1868 he exhibited five works, in three of which his increasing mastery over the free play of the brush was easily perceptible. One of these five, entitled "The Sisters," containing half-length portraits of his three little girls, was, according to the old rule, as the figures were life size, hung above the line. I remember the situation of this picture; it hung just above the line on the left of the door, as you entered the East or principal room. I was admiring it when Millais came up. Evidently he was considerably annoyed by its position, but he said he was not going to complain as he knew about the rule, and because Calderon, who was a hanger, was such a good fellow. It was my first experience of the invariable good-nature and consideration which Millais at all times displayed towards his fellow artists. He had a cheery way of saying, "Oh, I know, I know," when you apologised for a short-coming in your work, as the result of some difficulty you may have had with the model or the weather. His criticisms and remarks were invaluable; he detected a weak point with unfailing accuracy, and would often, with one or two touches of the brush, quickly set it right for you.

His half-length of "Stella," and his diploma work, "A Souvenir of Velasquez," which were also exhibited in 1868, attracted much attention





SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS, BART., P.R.A.





at the time by the splendid freedom and force of their execution; a freedom and power, too, that were thoroughly "national." For Millais's work owed nothing either to French, Belgian, or German training. His art was as purely English in feeling as that either of Reynolds or of Hogarth, and the Royal Academy may well feel proud that he received his training in its Schools, where, possibly from the example and teaching of Etty, he obtained in his boyhood the seeds which in his later life produced such free and beautiful blossoms.

Millais was a favourite in every class of society in which he mixed, and was welcomed everywhere for his most versatile and brilliant conversation, but his artistic personality was nowhere more conspicuous than at an Academy varnishing day. There he was the life and soul of the whole thing. He and Leighton, though men of totally different character, were always great friends. Without the slightest jealousy of any sort they thoroughly appreciated and valued each other's good qualities. I recollect Millais at one of Lord Leighton's Presidential dinners keeping the whole table in roars of laughter, Leighton himself, with tears in his eyes, being more convulsed than any one else.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

FREDERICK WALKER was, during his all too brief career, a great favourite of Millais. They were both keen fishermen, and both confirmed believers in the importance of going direct to Nature for almost everything that they introduced into their pictures. Millais, from the first, recognised the extreme delicacy and fidelity of Walker's work, and Walker, I know, valued very highly the kind friendship of the great Academician. It always seemed strange to me, on the other hand, that Leighton ("Frederick the Great" as we called him) saw little to admire in the art of "Frederick the Little," as we named Walker. I heard Leighton himself, on a varnishing day, confess as much, and it greatly surprised me. No doubt Walker's eye and hand had become much cramped by his long occupation as a wood draughtsman; and John Pettie, on a varnishing day, when in front of the "Harbour of Refuge" very justly remarked that "Walker wasn't fluent at oil painting," the smaller figures in most of his oil pictures being far more interesting and complete than the larger ones: but I believe that, had

Walker lived, he would have overcome this defect, and eventually developed a larger style and, very possibly, remarkable brush-power.

Walker came but to three of the member's varnishing days. He was elected an Associate in 1871, in which year he exhibited the largest and most dramatic picture he ever painted. It was called "At the Bar," and represented a haggard woman, a prisoner, awaiting the verdict which would decide her fate. A lurid brown tone pervaded the whole canvas, and there was nothing to relieve the misery of the scene; the wild, agonised face of the woman alone told as a light amidst the gloom. The picture was not hung well; indeed it must have been a terribly difficult task to find a suitable place for it anywhere, but I, and others with me, thought it rather cruel to have placed it so high, especially as the room in which it was hung (the Lecture Room, now the Sculpture Gallery) was not considered particularly honourable or important. At any rate, poor Walker felt very miserable and disappointed, more especially as he had been unable to sell it, the dealers averring that the painful nature of the subject rendered it of no market value. To the regret of many of us who greatly admired the work, Walker on its return home at the close of the Exhibition entirely obliterated the woman's face, and in that state left it for ever. I do not think that Walker enjoyed the three varnishing days that he attended; he was so extremely nervous and anxious about his pictures that he took little



interest in the fun that went on. He was in bad health, too, during the last three years of his life; he exhibited nothing in 1873 or 1874, and only a small one, "The Right of Way," in 1875, in the summer of which year he died.

The accompanying illustration is from a spirited little pen-and-ink drawing by Walker, which he entitled "Art Training, or A Glimpse of the Fancy." Charles Dickens, junior, with his brother Alfred, an American friend of mine named W. D. Morgan, Marks, Walker and I had been to see a melodrama at an East End theatre; it was a few days before the fight between Heenan and Tom King took place, and, at Dickens's suggestion, after the play we went to a public house kept by a retired pugilist, named Harry Orme, in the hope of learning something about the coming event. Walker and I found the room disagreeably hot and close, so we left the others and came away together.<sup>1</sup>

George Mason, like Walker, was present at the varnishing days for only three years of his Associateship. He was elected as an Associate in 1869, and died in 1872. Mason's health had begun to fail in Italy, some time before he was, by the kindness of his great friend, Lord Leighton, brought back to his native land, from which time to his death, he astonished and delighted the artistic world by his exquisitely painted idylls of English country life. I only knew him in

<sup>1</sup> The fight between Tom King and Heenan took place in January 1864, two years, I believe, after the more celebrated one between Heenan and Tom Sayers; King won the fight easily, but Heenan was said to be out of condition at the time.

— Art Training or, a glimpse of the Fancy — Jan 24. 54



From a sketch by F. WALKER, A.R.A.





these later years of his, but friends of mine who met him in Rome all agreed that his fun and geniality made him the very life and soul of the Café Greco in that city; I can well believe them, for though impaired in health, his pluck and matchless spirits never failed him to the very last. He entered at once into all the joviality of the varnishing days with keenest relish. It is worth noticing how, after his long sojourn in Italy where he acquired complete mastery over all the subtleties of painting, Mason on his return home devoted himself entirely to the portrayal of the scenery of his native land, its villages, and its peasantry. His knowledge of art, and of all the intricacies and mysteries of the craft, was amazing, and nothing could be more instructive than his remarks and criticisms on the pictures as he walked round the rooms on a varnishing day. It was amusing also as well as instructive, for everything he said was tempered with playful humour. I recollect the one and only election that he attended; he sat beside me, and we had made up our minds to vote for the same candidate for an Associateship. Our man, however, failed to reach the final ballot, and we were confronted with the difficulty of having to choose between two candidates, neither of whom we cared much about. I asked Mason what he was going to do—"Vote for 'A' or 'B'?" "Well," he said, "I know 'A's' pictures, and I hate them, but I can't recollect ever having seen one by 'B,' so I shall give him the benefit of the doubt." We both



voted for "B," and I am glad to say that "B" got in.

At the lunches Mason was in great form, delighting every one by his playfulness; he ate and drank in a way which for an invalid, as he was, might be termed reckless. I remember Hook telling him that he ought not to be eating crab and cucumber, on which Mason said, "What ought I to eat then?" Hook mentioned a mutton chop, on which Mason replied, "Well, if there is any one thing more than another that I can't digest, it is a mutton chop."

During Sir Francis Grant's Presidency one heard a very fair amount of broad Scots spoken amidst the babel of chatter and fun that went on after lunch whilst the members were enjoying their coffee and smoke. Sir Francis himself, I thought, seemed always a little more pleased than usual in proposing a newly-elected Associate's health at such lunches when the lucky individual hailed from beyond the Tweed.

The Academy may well feel proud of having on its roll the names of such distinguished Scottish painters as Wilkie, Raeburn, Allan, Roberts, and Sir Watson Gordon; whilst during Grant's Presidency were added those of Faed, Pettie, Orchardson, Norman Shaw, and Graham. Thorburn, the miniature painter, and Calder Marshall, the sculptor, both elected during Sir Martin Shee's Presidency, were still living, and survived until the early years of Lord Leighton's rule. Thorburn was a delightful specimen of a Scot; he came regularly to the very last to the

varnishing days, and I had many interesting talks with him. He made his fortune early in life by his very beautiful miniatures, and became suddenly fashionable for his having refused to paint, on account of a broken appointment, that great leader of female society at the time of the Queen's accession, the renowned Duchess of Sutherland; thereupon he was immediately overwhelmed with commissions. I served twice on the Council with Calder Marshall, in the years 1878 and 1886. He was rather quiet, and very Scottish and shrewd. I got on very well indeed with both Thorburn and Marshall, for among other good qualities both were like myself inveterate pipe smokers.

John Pettie and Sir William Quiller Orchardson I knew personally for several years before they were elected. Their pictures have been admired greatly, for the extreme dexterity and brilliance of their execution, by all the good judges of the day, and to the general public they seemed some of the most attractive works in the Exhibitions. The diploma works that the Academicians present to the Academy on their election, are not always, perhaps, first-rate examples of the artist's power; but this certainly cannot be said of the diploma work of John Pettie; it is entitled "Jacobites," and besides being a magnificent specimen of the artist's work, is so full of the poetry and glamour of "Waverley," and "Redgauntlet," as to entitle the painter to rank almost as high on the roll of fame as Sir Walter himself. It is one of those pictures which once seen is

never forgotten. Pettie, as I knew him, was simple and straightforward, thoroughly sincere, and very much in earnest about everything he did or said. In judging a picture he perhaps laid too much stress on the quality of its execution; to him the whole beauty of a picture seemed to consist in the dexterity of its brush work. He had an unbounded admiration for Rembrandt; it was a great treat, and a great lesson too, to look in company with John Pettie at a fine head by the mighty Dutchman at one of our winter Exhibitions. Orchardson was elected an Associate on the same night as Sir Edwin Landseer's brother Tom, the engraver, and myself. I remember vividly our reception by the Council when we attended to sign the roll and receive our diplomas. Tom Landseer was stone deaf and spoke in rather a loud staccato way, each word being slowly and carefully pronounced. He was a universal favourite, short and stout, with curly, reddish-brown hair, and with an ever-smiling countenance; he always reminded me somehow of a large, very amiable, purring tabby cat. On that night he and I went down together to Trafalgar Square in a cab; we found Orchardson already at the Academy, and after waiting a short time, we were escorted into the Council Room by Calderon, who acted as "Boots" that year. The newest elected member, on his first year's Council, is termed "the Boots"; he has to do little errands at the President's commands, and it is his duty to introduce newly-elected Associates to the Council



Room. It happened that year that both Tom Landseer's brothers were members of Council, and on this night they sat, with other intimate friends of Tom's, along one side of the Council-table, with Sir Francis in the centre. Three chairs were placed for us, opposite to them, by Calderon.

The moment that we entered the room dear old Tom, seeing his brothers and his friends thus seated in formal array, raised his hands up above his head and gave forth a loud and playful exclamation of recognition, very much resembling the crow of an exultant baby, whereupon Edwin and Charles, shook their heads at him with disapproving frowns. After this the ceremony went on in a solemn decorous way. On returning home in the cab Tom exclaimed, "Did — it — strike — you — that — there — was — some — thing — unnecessary — grim — about — the — whole — affair? Edwin — and — Charles — looked — very — cross." To which I nodded my assent.

Orchardson's execution was far more tender and delicate than Pettie's, the influence of Gainsborough or Watteau being perhaps more perceptible in his works than that of Rembrandt and the other Dutch masters. Like Gainsborough, he always preserved the luminosity of his ground, using a fully primed white canvas. He told me that, to the very last day of his work on a picture, he preserved a small portion, untouched, of the white ground, in order to keep the tone as bright as possible; indeed he sometimes sent a picture to the Exhibition with a small patch of



the primed canvas still untouched. There was much of Watteau's sparkle and exquisite evasiveness in the way Orchardson painted his draperies and accessories, especially in his rendering of flowers and silver.

Neither Pettie nor Orchardson nor the other Scottish members mixed much in the general fun, practical jokes, and boyish play which went on at times amongst the more irrepressible of the members; and, after the manner of Scots, they clung together a good deal, talking over with one another the successes or failures of their fellow countrymen with the greatest interest. I myself was often one of the noisiest of the irrepressibles, and I am sorry to say that it was not until nearly the end of the nineteenth century that I learnt to value the sterling good qualities of Orchardson, Pettie, and MacWhirter. On all matters connected with art their judgment was as remarkable for its soundness and astuteness as it was for its perfect sincerity and truth. John Pettie died, alas! too soon for me to know him thoroughly, but with the other two I formed a friendship which year by year increased in warmth until the end of their lives. Millais was a great admirer of these men's works; and I believe that Pettie's brilliant execution had considerable influence over him. On the varnishing days Millais could be often seen talking eagerly with Pettie in front either of one of his own works or of one of Pettie's, especially at the time when both had taken extensively to portrait painting.

During the years 1910 and 1911 the Royal Academy suffered an irreparable loss by the deaths of the other two distinguished members of this Scottish trio, Sir William Quiller Orchardson and John MacWhirter. The former had been in failing health for some time, and for a year or two before he died his works, though still surpassing all others in the Exhibitions in the delicacy of their execution, lacked somewhat the brilliance of colour and sparkle for which he had so long been famous. But MacWhirter's end was indeed one that might well be envied by any artist, dying, as he did, in full possession of all his powers; the two pictures, the one of "Morning" and the other of "Evening" in the "Old Harbour of Genoa" which he exhibited in 1909 being, in the estimation of many, the finest that he ever painted.

I, too, was lucky, for in that year, I had the good fortune to serve on the Council with him, which afforded me frequent and delightful opportunities for the appreciation of his honourable and manly character, as well as for increasing if it were possible to increase, the warmth of my friendship for him.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS had the unique honour paid to him by the Royal Academy of being elected an Associate and Academician in the same year, 1867. Though a member of the Institution for thirty-seven years he served but once on the Council, viz. in 1869, which happened to be the first year on which he came on the rota. It was not altogether bad health, and certainly not any want of respect on his part towards the Academy that caused him to decline service on the three further occasions when his turn for service came round. As Mr Herbert had grown to believe himself a Frenchman, so I think, Watts, from his long and absorbing study of the great Italian masters, and from his continual endeavours to reproduce on his own canvases their style of composition and their qualities of colour and execution, had gradually come to regard himself as a sort of reincarnation, in the nineteenth century, of one of the artistic giants of the sixteenth. And indeed there was such a glamour about the man, and about his picturesque surroundings at Little Holland

House, that any one with strong imagination might easily believe him to be really one of the Old Masters born, as it were, out of due season. He invariably attended every year on at least one of the varnishing days, though I never remember his joining the rest at lunch, or sharing in the chatter and fun over coffee afterwards. He moved about among us and talked freely with any one who liked to listen, but he never seemed to me to belong to us, or to the age in which he lived.

I was introduced to Watts several years before my election as an Associate, and owing to his kindness frequently visited at his studio in Little Holland House. At that time he was experimenting largely in tempera and nothing pleased him more than to expatiate on the beauties and advantages of that fascinating method of painting. I was only too glad to avail myself of his kindness, and, profiting by his advice, I took to tempera myself; a great number of the most successful of my works were commenced in that medium and afterwards finished in oil.

Watts was one of the first to discover the advantages of benzine as a diluent in oil painting. It was he who introduced the facilities of this evil-smelling spirit to Sir John Millais, who afterwards used it freely in painting his large picture of "Moses, Aaron, and Hur"—a work, by the way, painted somewhat in emulation of Watts's own pictures. When all Watts's principal paintings were collected and exhibited in the Winter



Exhibition of 1905, I could not help feeling that those pictures of his were the most interesting that least reminded me of the Old Masters. He was seen at his best when he was most himself, and for this reason I believe that in the future his fame will rest chiefly on his magnificent portraits, many of which would hold their own bravely if hung beside those of Reynolds or Vandyke, or even of Titian.

I have said of Watts that though coming among us continually, showing great interest in our work, and conversing freely with us at all times in the most friendly manner, yet to me he never seemed to belong to us, or to mix in perfect affinity with our ways and doings; and although no two men could have been more distinct in other respects, I always entertained much the same feeling with regard to Lord Leighton. Even before he became President, he would pass on the varnishing days from room to room among us all, as a distinct and wonderful being, perfect in all his ways, and surpassing us all in courtesy, gesture, voice, and appearance. It reminded me of the sudden advent, in a garden, of a beautiful Red Admiral butterfly amidst the ordinary flies, bees, and wasps.

Leighton had none of our little failings or human weaknesses. Our intercourse with one another was enlivened at times by sarcastic chaff, petty jealousies, and even open ruptures; as well as by occasional indulgence in childish pranks and practical jokes of all sorts, but although he laughed heartily at our playful ways,

and never for an instant assumed the "superior person" in our midst, he never by any chance originated or started any such frivolities himself. He was not, however, a wet blanket on our spirits; on the contrary, to any of us entering the Academy, on a varnishing morning, it was a most inspiring thing to hear his beautiful tenor voice and genial laughter ringing through the place, and this you could not fail to hear if he were anywhere in the rooms at the time. He had a kind look and a smile for every one, and showed a friendly interest in the personal welfare of each of us individually that evinced the sweetness of his nature and the largeness of his heart.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing in the career of this extraordinary man was that so far as any of us knew, he never once relaxed his attentions to his duties or to his work from year's end to year's end. He had no hobbies in the ordinary sense of the word. He cared for no sport; he neither hunted, fished, nor shot. Though he loved flowers he took no pleasure in gardening. He had a cat in his house, for he appreciated the beauty of its form, but it was no pet, and I never heard that he possessed a dog at any time of his life. He was passionately fond of music, and went occasionally to the theatres, even at times enjoying the broadest farce. He was also an eager reader of books; but ever in and through these diversions his mind was still in activity, and they afforded him none of the relief from mental strain that could be obtained by a few days spent on the moors,

the golf links, or the river. Once at Henley Regatta, I had the pleasure of having both Leighton and Millais in my punt for a short time. Neither of them had ever been to this gay festival, and they with Val Prinsep formed a little party and came down from town on one of the days, lunching on the meadows by Fawley Court. I had my little girl with me in my punt and a large basket of strawberries from my mother's garden at Remenham. I took Millais and Leighton on board and punted them up and down the course. The contrast between the two was very striking. Millais was dressed in a grey homespun jacket with a deer-stalker's cap on; he lit his pipe, threw himself back on the cushions and abandoned himself completely to the full enjoyment of the whole scene, remarking continually on the pretty faces of the girls in the boats as we passed along. Leighton had somehow dressed himself exactly in the right way. He had not adopted the straw hat and flannels of the rowing man, which would have been ridiculous and affected on his part, but had on a light grey morning suit with a well-fitting grey felt hat in which he looked, I thought, unusually handsome. He now and then bowed to people whom he recognised in passing boats, but devoted nearly the whole of his attentions to my little girl, in whose artless prattle he seemed to take the greatest interest and pleasure; she, on her part, was quite at home with him at once, feeding him from time to time with the largest





LORD LEIGHTON, P.R.A.  
*From the bust by SIR THOMAS BROCK, R.A., K.C.B.*

[To face p. 180.]





strawberries she could pick out. She was much impressed by the manners of both Millais and Leighton, and spoke of them afterwards as "the two noblemen" whom I took in my punt. I could not help wondering what Leighton would have been like if he had had a family of children of his own, for he had, I am sure, the greatest love and reverence for all children. I remember that when calling on me in St John's Wood he met, as he entered the garden, one of my babies in its perambulator going out with its nurse; he instantly dropt on one knee and kissed the baby's hand; it was a little act of homage on his part that immediately won the hearts of both the child's mother and its nurse.

Such little incidents, from my personal acquaintance with the illustrious President, may appear to many persons too trivial to be recorded, but they possess a distinct interest to me as having occurred on some of the extremely rare opportunities I had of meeting him when he was, so to speak, "off duty."

It was seldom that one saw Leighton taken aback or disconcerted in any way; but at a General Assembly it was once my lot to bring him to ground in an unexpected manner. A debate was in progress on a proposal of Mr Horsley's that the Exhibition rooms should be opened on Sunday afternoons to the members, and possibly to their families also. The proposal did not meet with much approval, and, in the course of some desultory talk on the subject, I happened to say that I believed it possible, by

means of sufficient bribes to the porters, for strangers to obtain admission to the rooms on Sundays, adding that I knew of a case in which this had actually been effected. Whereupon the President rapt loudly with his gavell and arose, a perfect "Ζεύς νεφεληγερέτα" with thunderbolt ready to launch at my devoted head, exclaiming, "Gentlemen, a most serious allegation has been made by a member, reflecting on the integrity of the servants of this establishment, and I call upon him at once to substantiate the truth of his accusation." There was dead silence and some curiosity when I, unabashed, rose and asserted that it was quite true, but when I went on to say that it happened during my father's time, Leighton instantly collapsed into his chair remarking something about "ancient history," whilst I related how a certain Captain Morgan, in whose ship, *The Philadelphia*, my father and mother with my brothers and sisters had crossed the Atlantic and back in 1834, had once made a bet with my father that he would see the Exhibition on the Sunday before the private view. He had to sail for New York on the Wednesday, and sure enough on the Monday he won his bet, not only by describing the principal pictures in the Exhibition, but giving as well the exact positions they occupied on the walls. The Captain remarked that he never knew any lock that the golden key would not open.

At the delightful dinners which Leighton gave annually during the winter to the members and

Associates of the Academy, and to many of the principal outside exhibitors, his duties as host were performed with the same absolute perfection as his duties to the Academy were when he occupied the Presidential chair. He gave every one the heartiest of welcomes; he had a friendly and sympathetic word for each. He displayed all the treasures of his beautiful house to us, showing us freely the pictures he was at work upon in his studio, even inviting our criticisms upon them. And yet in spite of all his cordiality and sweetness such an impenetrable halo of perfection seemed to surround the man, and all that he said and did, as rendered it impossible for us to converse with him quite in the same free and brotherly way that we could with one another. The conscientiousness, thoroughness, and punctuality with which he performed every duty of his office, his high ideals, the exquisite grace and courtesy of his manners, the universality of his talents and accomplishments—these things were altogether hopelessly beyond any attainment on our parts.

Perhaps I may have felt this inferiority more acutely than some of my fellows, for, all my life, negligence and unpunctuality in the performance of anything connected with duty have been my besetting sins. Leighton once asked me to join the Artists' Volunteers. He was forming two new companies of that celebrated corps, and offered me the command of one. I had already been for twelve years a full private in the Victoria Rifles, and as I knew very well



how much would be expected of me if I were to serve as an officer under his command I felt bound to decline. I frankly declared my unsuitableness for the preferment on the ground of my unpunctuality. I told him that I never even carried a watch. I wore, it is true, a watch chain, which I showed him, but at one end of it was a latch key and at the other a corkscrew. I shall never forget his expression of pain and surprise at this confession of weakness on my part, and I need scarcely say that he desisted at once from any further persuasion.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

THE best idea of Lord Leighton's personal appearance can be formed, without doubt, from Sir Thomas Brock's magnificent bronze bust, for although Watts's portrait of him in the gown of the Dilettanti Society, in the possession of the Academy, has much of the dignity of his character and is fine in colour, the neck is, I think, rather too thick, and the head has not the fine balance on the shoulders or the manly bearing that the bust renders so admirably. The bust, too, showing every view of his fine head, is equally remarkable as a likeness either in full face or in profile.

I never remember seeing Leighton work on any of his pictures on a varnishing day. If they seemed to him to require it, he had them varnished by a professional picture cleaner and varnisher.

One of the most popular and conspicuous of the members on the varnishing days, during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, was Valentine Cameron Prinsep. He was conspicuous amid the others by his height, by the large muscular development of his frame, by his fluffy hair, and the vivacity of his countenance; and he was popular with everybody on account

of his affability, generosity, and the straightforward heartiness of his manners.

The character and dispositions of very many of the greatest masters of art throughout all ages, have occasionally been marred by egotism, and by feelings of jealousy entertained towards their contemporaries. From any weakness of this kind Val Prinsep was absolutely free. I knew him intimately for many years, and can most truly say that I never heard from his lips a single depreciatory remark or an ill-natured sarcasm about any of his fellow artists or their works. He was a lively and amusing conversationalist, an ever welcome guest both in the highest circles of society and at the Bohemian supper parties of the fraternity of artists in St John's Wood.

Prinsep was a thorough artist; his pictures always showed originality in their conception, and their execution was manly and vigorous. He possessed a fine natural sense of colour, a gift of which, it seemed to me, he might have made greater use than he actually did, for although his colour was at all times wholesome and pure, many of his early works were richer and fuller in this respect than those he painted at a later period. He was entirely devoid of affectation of any sort. His modesty, when showing his pictures to us, in his studio or at the Academy on a varnishing day, was very remarkable; I have often seen him blush like a girl of sixteen when I have expressed my admiration for them.

Prinsep displayed almost as much ability in the use of the pen as he did in that of the paint brush. Besides writing a clever novel and some short plays, he delivered, during the winters of 1900 to 1903, as Professor of Painting, ten lectures to the students of the Academy, remarkable alike for their sound judgment and truth, and for the grace and facility of the style in which they were written.

As I lived in the country I had not the pleasure of hearing him deliver any of these lectures; but with that generosity to which I have previously alluded as so characteristic of the man, Prinsep had them, at his own expense, beautifully printed, bound, and illustrated, and presented copies of them to all his friends. I have read these lectures several times with great interest. Every word in them of the advice that he gives to the students is, as I have said of his colouring, alike wholesome and pure. He had also rare humour, for in the concluding lecture, entitled, "New art and Old Masters," he imagines a visit paid to the Tate Gallery by the shades of Michael Angelo, Raphael, Cellini, Reynolds, Hogarth, and others. The great ghosts there meet and converse with Leighton and Millais. The idea is carried out in an instructive, humorous, and ingenious manner, though it can scarcely have proved so interesting to the boys and girls in the Schools as it was to those older and more advanced students, the members of the Academy themselves.

Val Prinsep joined heartily in all the fun



that was carried on by the lighter-hearted and younger members on the varnishing days.

At the afternoon tea, the small square space at the bottom of the staircase which leads down to the refreshment room is crowded by members, who sit here at little tables enjoying their tea and smoke. A ceaseless babel of laughter and talking goes on here, and Val, on one occasion, got hold of a long rod, used by the porters for opening the windows, on the end of which he stuck a bun and, leaning over the railings at the top of the staircase, lowered it down towards the heads of the crowd below, in the manner in which one feeds the bears at the Zoo. It had a most ludicrous effect, and was responded to by roars, growls, and laughter from the bears beneath.

Prinsep, together with Du Maurier, Fred Walker, and Eyre Crowe, was elected an honorary member of the coterie of artists, known as the St John's Wood Clique, and was presented with the little gridiron which was the badge of membership. He came frequently to our evening festivities, joining with enthusiasm in all the wildest frolics of the society.

At an entertainment given by Mr Storey and myself at our studios, which, at that time, were above one another over a baker's shop in St John's Wood, the other members of the Clique arrived by a preconcerted arrangement, dressed in all sorts of fancy costumes. Prinsep and Du Maurier came later than the rest, together with Sir William Agnew and

his elder brother Tom. They were dressed in ordinary evening clothes. This, however, did not suit Val, and from our costume-boxes he very soon arrayed himself in various odds and ends, in which he looked, I thought, the quaintest and most picturesque of the whole gathering. After supper we adjourned to



"INVITATION TO A CARD EVENING."

*From a sketch by P. H. CALDERON, R.A.*

Storey's studio, above. There was a piano here on which Tom Agnew played whilst we whirled round the room in the maddest and wildest dance that I ever engaged in. "Oh! qu'ils sont loin, ces jours si regrettés!" There are only three alive now who were present at that dance.

Two members of the St John's Wood Clique, both of them very intimate and much loved

friends of mine, whose strongly marked individuality and keen sense of humour aided greatly in the enlivenment of the varnishing days during the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century, here demand notice. Henry Stacey Marks and John Evan Hodgson, except as regards their love of art, their sense of humour, and their perfect sincerity, were as different from one another as can possibly be imagined.

The only education worth mentioning that Marks ever received was a complete and accurate acquaintance with the works of Shakespeare. Hodgson was at Rugby a sixth form boy during the reign of Archibald Tait; he was a first-rate classical scholar, and became an accomplished linguist, speaking German, French, Italian, and Russian. Marks was left with his brothers, a sister and mother, absolutely penniless at the age of seventeen. Hodgson's father was a wealthy Russian merchant, and John Evan might, if he had chosen, have amassed a large fortune by engaging in his father's business; this, however, he declined to do, having resolutely determined to follow his artistic instincts.

Marks passed his early years almost entirely in London; he neither knew nor cared for any country sports or pastimes. Hodgson travelled extensively in his youth, and was a thorough sportsman, devoted to hunting, fishing, and shooting. In their domestic life the distinction between the two men was equally marked. In personal appearance the one was thick set, florid in complexion, with curly hair; the other



thin, wiry, pale, and delicate - looking, with straight, fine brown hair. And yet these two men, so different in many respects, got on famously together; their friendship, which had commenced at Leigh's School of Art in Newman Street, lasting firm and strong to the end of their lives.

Marks, though a Cockney of Cockneys, and, as I have said, no sportsman, had an intense love for Nature and all her ways, and a more interesting and delightful companion on a sketching tour, no artist could possibly find. In his autobiographical reminiscences, entitled "Pen and Pencil Sketches," my readers can find a full account of the artist's life and his works, and I shall not therefore further allude to them here, except by calling attention to the very remarkable friendship that sprung up between Marks and Ruskin about the year 1876, and which lasted until the latter's health and mental powers entirely gave way. It was, I think, the sincerity of Marks's nature that captivated Ruskin's heart; he delighted also greatly in Marks's humour, which had a strong Shakespearean flavour in it that rendered it very fascinating. Ruskin enjoyed to the utmost hearing Marks sing his comic songs, "Betsy Waring," "Cupid's Garden," "Doctor Samuel Johnson," and the rest; he often visited Marks in the evenings at his house in St John's Wood, and Marks was Ruskin's guest at Oxford and at Coniston on several occasions.

At the varnishing days Marks delighted in playing tricks and little practical jokes of various



kinds. I remember once he supplied a whole row of gentlemen's busts in the Sculpture Gallery with cigarettes; he lit these and stuck them firmly between the lips of the busts, where they went on smoking and smouldering for quite a long time. The effect was most ludicrous; the poor dummy heads seemed so happy and contented with their smoke. Another incident is worth relating. There are little oblong boxes on the dado in some of the rooms, in which are the arrangements for switching on the lights, and these boxes have glass panels on their fronts. On one of these Marks painted a landscape; it looked exactly like a very small picture in a polished oak frame stuck in a corner amongst the other pictures. Marks then went to Sir Frederick Eaton with the information that one of the pictures in No. VI. Room was in an inadmissible oak frame, implying a serious oversight on the part of the Secretary. Sir Frederick was considerably relieved as well as amused when he saw the little picture, which some of us declared to be another work by the celebrated policeman. Greatly to their credit Marks together with his brothers and their sister, by dint of hard work, supported their mother and helped to make her comfortable in her old age. One of his brothers, John, married Fred Walker's twin sister, Polly, and compiled a most admirable Memoir of Walker, with an account of all his works.

John Evan Hodgson was, of all the members of the Clique, both the sweetest tempered and



THE AUTHOR.

*From a sketch by H. S. MARKS, R.A.*



the widest minded. He was quaint and original in all he said or did; he was for ever experimenting in his art, planning and scheming in his brain for new ideas and novel effects. His admiration for the works of Turner would at one time dominate him entirely, while at another his mind would be fixed wholly on Raphael or Old Crome. He was much addicted to trying various methods, vehicles, and pigments in the technique of his paintings, though, as is generally the case with those artists who have such proclivities, the results of his experiments were, on the completion of the picture, imperceptible to any but himself. It was for these characteristic habits of his that he obtained amongst his comrades the sobriquet of "The Dodger."

Leighton had a very high admiration for Hodgson's works, and delighted in his intellectual conversation and the versatility of his accomplishments. As Professor of Painting, his lectures were remarkable for subtlety of idea and for finished erudition of style, but though intensely interesting and original they were, perhaps, rather over the heads of the students to whom they were delivered. Hodgson's knowledge of books and languages fitted him admirably for the Librarianship of the Academy, which post he held from 1882 until his death in 1895. Of all the departed brother artists, my friends in my early career, there is none whose loss I so regret and who remain so deeply fixed in loving memory as the gentle Dodger, dear John Hodgson.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

MY record of the delightful varnishing days of the latter part of the nineteenth century would be incomplete without some tribute to the memory of another dear old friend, Eyre Crowe. He was elected, very early, as an honorary member of the St John's Wood Clique, and was a constant and most welcome guest at all our little outings; beloved by all of us for his extreme good nature, his hearty laugh, and the unaffected simplicity of his manners.

Thackeray made Crowe's acquaintance in his early days in Paris, and retained for him the warmest friendship and esteem to the end of his life. When the great novelist made his tour in the United States he took Crowe, whom he called "Monsieur Corbeaux," with him as amanuensis and private secretary. Crowe informed me, also, that he wrote out nearly the whole of "Esmond," Thackeray composing and dictating to him, from a sofa, where he lay with a cigar in his mouth. While employing him in this way I have no doubt that Thackeray must have frequently availed himself of Crowe's judgment as the

work proceeded; for, besides possessing a very intimate acquaintance with English literature of the eighteenth century, Crowe had a strong sense of humour of the Hogarthian type, and a perfect mastery of the French language.

After Thackeray's death Crowe wrote for *Scribners' Magazine* a charming account of "Thackeray's Haunts and Homes," most admirably and faithfully illustrated by beautiful drawings from the actual places mentioned. I thought this little article so valuable and so well done that it was a pity it should appear only in magazine form, and on my advice Crowe got it published, in the most dainty binding, in book form.

During the Franco-German war, when many distinguished French artists took refuge in England, Gerome became the guest of his dear friend Crowe, at whose studio the members of our Clique were invited to meet him at a supper party. On that occasion Gerome made the coffee for us, himself. I remember being struck by the extreme delicacy and finished beauty of the distinguished exile's hands, and the deftness and daintiness of their action. He astonished us, too, by expressing his admiration for the foggy gloom of the London streets; he wondered why we did not introduce it in our paintings. He was quite in earnest upon this point, for, during his sojourn with Eyre Crowe, he painted one or two little pictures, the subjects of which were taken from the foggy streets of London; one of these, I remember, was of an Italian organ boy by a lamp-post.

Dalou, the famous French sculptor, was also in England at that time, and one summer evening Crowe invited him and another exile, Heilbuth, to meet Monsieur Legros, Calderon, and myself at a little dinner at a French restaurant in Wardour Street. It was a very hot evening, and we all dined in our shirt sleeves with the windows wide open. On all occasions of this sort Crowe's hearty laugh was far better and more exhilarating than champagne. Crowe's works possessed much of the sincerity and honesty that characterised the man himself; many of his earlier works being in this respect quite admirable. Such pictures as those he painted of the Blue Coat School and the Quaker's meeting, from the simplicity and truth with which the subjects are treated, have a charm about them that, as far as I know, is quite unique in pictures of this sort.

From this light sketch of the man my readers can easily imagine how popular Crowe was on a varnishing day amongst the lighter-hearted of the members. It was not, however, on these three days all play; many artists worked assiduously on their own pictures, more especially the landscape-painters, some of whom would come to the Academy as early as eight o'clock in the morning in order to get their work done without fear of interruption. Among such hard workers one of the hardest was Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. His pictures were generally of modest dimensions, and by permission of the Council he would have the one on which he wished to work taken to the empty class-room which was used



for the Life School in the evenings. There seated comfortably, with the picture on an easel before him, with a big cigar in his mouth, and a number of sketches and studies around him, he did wonderful work on it, even at times making extensive alterations with extraordinary swiftness and dexterity. He always joined the others, however, at the four o'clock tea, when he immediately became one of the most lively and amusing of the lighter-hearted set.

Among those who have recently been taken from us few were more highly gifted than Edwin Abbey. I enjoyed the privilege of serving on the Council with him in 1909, when I had ample opportunity of experiencing the sweetness of his nature and the geniality and humour of his conversation. My grandfather was born in Maryland; my father was brought up and educated in Philadelphia, and, consequently, I have been intimately acquainted with Americans of every sort and variety all my life; but I never met any who displayed to greater advantage the best and brightest of their national characteristics than Edwin Abbey. And what a fine artist he was! What fertility of imagination he possessed — what feeling for grace of line and balance of masses—how brilliant and daring he was in colour! How much his pictures helped to brighten and enliven the walls of our Exhibitions in these later years when the production of endless low-toned “idylls” and half-fledged inanities seems to be the only ambition of rising genius.



I grieved much that the Hanging Committee could not have seen their way to a more adequate and worthy arrangement of the fine collection of his paintings and designs which was exhibited after his death. The largest and most important of his works, having glass over them, were quite invisible, hung as they were in the dimly lit central hall. Of course one did not expect much from the writers in the newspapers, but the Academy at least might have done more honour to the works of one of the most accomplished of its members.

Abbey lived for many years in a beautiful old country house at Fairford, where he built himself an enormous studio, or rather a combination of studios. It was not in any way beautiful, for there was a quantity of corrugated iron used in its construction, but it was a most convenient and commodious workshop. It was divided into several compartments, and fitted with large hanging cupboards, in which were a marvellous assortment of costumes. At one time his friend, Mr Sargent, worked with Abbey here, for there was ample room in it for both.

An Italian model, Carlo Rossi by name, was permanently engaged, and acted as a general man-servant as well as a model for Abbey. Abbey was fond of playing cricket. He told me that when he first lived in Gloucestershire the country folk thought little of him as a neighbour, but that when he one day brought down from town

an XI. of artist-cricketers who beat the local XI. in one innings, he at once rose in their estimation and became very popular, and all artists who visited Fairford afterwards were treated with great respect.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE VARNISHING DAYS—*continued*

THERE were plenty of quiet and serious members at these delightful meetings. The architects also gave a considerable air of respectable gravity to the assemblage. The Professor of Chemistry was always present, in order to answer any questions that might be put to him by members as to the nature and durability of the various pigments and vehicles used in painting.

Frank Holl and Henry Moore, though very dissimilar in other respects, were both what I should term "serious" members on the varnishing days. The former, I think, never knew the value of relaxation, and seemed, to the great detriment of his health, to be incapable of taking it. At the height of his success he sometimes would exhibit, in one year, sixteen portraits, eight at the Royal Academy, and another eight at the Grosvenor Gallery. He threw his whole heart and soul into every picture he painted. The strain was greater than the very strongest could have endured with impunity, and he died at the early age of forty-three in the very zenith of

his fame, and in full possession of his splendid power over the brush. Holl was a very interesting and earnest conversationalist, especially on subjects connected with art. He had singularly fine eyes, large, eager, and animated, and his occasional smiles were extremely delightful. One of his daughters has compiled a very interesting "Memoir" of her father's life which gives a faithful account of the indefatigable devotion that Frank Holl had for work, together with records of the great number of distinguished personages who have been immortalised on his canvases.

Henry Moore was a fellow-student of mine in 1853. I saw him frequently at the meetings of the Society of Painters, who exhibited at the Dudley Gallery before he was elected an Associate in 1885. I knew, also, very well his brothers, Albert and John Charles Moore. It was a remarkable trio of genius in one family, all three distinguishing themselves in different styles.

The works of J. C. Moore are scarcely so well known as those by his more celebrated brothers, Henry and Albert. I recollect them, however, as being full of tender grace and delicacy, with perhaps a wider scale of colour than the works of his two brothers show. They consisted chiefly of portraits of children in water-colour and of Italian landscapes.

Henry Moore, during the brief ten years of his membership, was so constantly liable to attacks from the dreadful scourge of influenza,



with its terribly depressing after effects, that he could scarcely be expected to partake much in the joviality of the varnishing days, but in the little outings in which the members of "The Dudley Gallery" formerly indulged he exhibited plenty of vivacity, participating freely in the general fun. He was a keen observer of Nature, and had a store of knowledge about her ways and doings which rendered his conversation especially interesting to me at all times. Henry Moore competed for the Turner Gold Medal in 1857, the first year it was given. Though he failed to obtain it, most of his fellow-students, including myself, thought his picture far better than the one to which the prize was awarded.

Born in 1803, and dying in his hundredth year in 1902, Thomas Sidney Cooper easily made the record for longevity over all other Academicians since the foundation of the Institution in 1769. He was not, however, by any means senior member at the time of his death; Frith, Hook, and Goodall, who were elected Academicians respectively in 1853, 1860, and 1863, all survived Cooper, who was elected after them in 1867. He had been kept waiting as an Associate for twenty-two years. Always a hard worker, he must have produced an extraordinary number of pictures, the greater part of them representing cows in meadows. His earlier works now look richer in tone and colour, owing to the mellowing effects of time, but, as a matter of fact, he seems to have maintained an even level of excellence throughout the whole of his long

career, never having gone either above or below himself, and never having altered his style or simple technique.

It chanced that I served twice on the Council with Sidney Cooper, in the years 1885 and 1893, but on neither of these occasions was he on the Hanging Committee with me. He regularly attended the ordinary meetings of the Council, although he was so deaf that he could hear very little of the business of the meeting. He employed his time at the Council table in making clever little pen-and-ink sketches of



animals, mostly sheep and cows, and when ever a vote had to be taken the member next to him would shout in his ear the subject which had been discussed so that he might vote. At the Council table in 1893 I sat next to him and performed this duty of making him hear, in return for which he gave me several of his little sketches, one of which, representing a young bull, is here reproduced.

As the work of a man over ninety years of age which was drawn by him in my presence

entirely without the use of spectacles, I think it is a remarkably spirited production. Cooper told me that he had better eyesight at that time than he had when he was only fifty. He owed his good health, he said, entirely to careful abstemiousness.

At the Council dinner which took place on the last day of the year, 1893, Sidney Cooper sat immediately opposite the President, Lord Leighton, who was particularly kind to the old man, leaning forward and saying pretty things to him in a loud voice across the table during dinner, and towards the end of it Cooper began a story about an accidental lighting of the beacon fires along the south coast, at the time when Bonaparte was encamped at Boulogne. I could not catch the story very well, but the scare arose from some old countryman's bacon, which hung in the chimney, having caught fire. A boy gave the alarm that the *bacon* was burning, which was mistaken by some one else as the "beacon on fire." It was a long story, and old Sidney, like the ancient mariner, held the President with his eye until the very end. I wish I could have made a sketch of the two. At the Royal private view on that year 1893, Sidney Cooper was introduced to our present Queen, at that time the Princess Mary. The old man was greatly delighted with the compliments that he received from her upon his works.

Samuel Cousins, the last great master of mezzotint engraving, was a constant attendant on the varnishing days until his death in 1887. He was picturesquely conspicuous in appearance,



reserved and dignified in manner, laconic and dry in utterance, and greatly respected by all. Whatever he said was to the point and accurate. He was a very old friend of my father's, and I loved to engage him in conversation, especially on the subject of his own beautiful branch of art. He asserted, and I believe with absolute truth, that he could produce plates equal in every respect to those of the earlier masters of mezzotint if he were allowed to make use of copper, both for the execution and printing, but that no publisher would dream of giving him a commission for such a plate, as it would be impossible to produce a sufficient number of proofs from it to secure the desired profit. He told me that he could himself detect deterioration in the proofs from a copper plate after the seventh impression.

Cousins, when young, worked a great deal for S. W. Reynolds; many of the most beautiful little plates in Reynolds's well-known publication of Sir Joshua's works being executed by him. The little Miss Bowles, with her dog in her arms, is one of these by Cousins, and my readers can, if they care, easily see for themselves, the extreme beauty of Cousins's work by comparing the head of the little girl in this plate with those in any other engraving of the picture that has ever been made. Cousins was a great artist, and drew beautifully even when quite young. I have seen a series of portraits of his relatives and friends, drawn in pencil by him when a mere youth, that will bear comparison for their



accuracy and delicacy with the drawings of Holbein. Frank Holl's portrait of Cousins is one of the finest that he ever painted; but, on the varnishing day in the year in which it was exhibited, it astonished all of us to learn that Cousins himself was by no means pleased with it. Cousins's belief in the integrity of the Academy and his love for his brother artists was evinced by his bequest of two annuities of £80 a year to be at the disposal of the Council for the relief of poor artists of distinction.

Though in no way the equal of Cousins, Thomas Oldham Barlow was a mezzotint engraver of considerable power, and, as the rapid extinction of that beautiful art seems imminent, impressions from his plates as well as from those of Cousins will no doubt be eagerly sought after by the collectors of engravings in the future. Barlow, like Cousins, was frequent in his attendance at the varnishing days, but was a man of very different appearance and manners, being as lively and sociable as the other was reserved and sedate. He mixed freely in all the fun that went on, was hail-fellow-well-met with every one, extremely kind hearted, and ever ready to help those who needed it. Millais's portrait of him is wonderfully like the man in his later years. Millais and Barlow were great friends, but it is curious that Barlow was not at all pleased with this portrait, just as Cousins was dissatisfied with his own portrait by Frank Holl.

Of other departed members whom I used to meet on the varnishing days I do not propose to

write anything. Some of them, as, for instance, Messrs Frith, Horsley, and Goodall, published their autobiographies during their lives; and, of the others, although many were indeed contemporaries of my father's, I remember little that would interest my readers. Academy etiquette deters me also from saying anything of a personal nature about my present colleagues, many of whom I am proud to say are old and very dear friends of mine, and all of whom I hope may, for many years to come, live to support the honour and dignity of the Academy.

On the varnishing days I seldom did any work on my pictures beyond cleaning the dust off them with a wet sponge, and occasionally passing a little "medium" over those parts of the surface where the paint had dried dead or unevenly. There is nothing so bewildering to a newly-elected Associate on a varnishing day as the conflicting nature of the advice he is sure to receive from different members; and his safest course is to consider well the individual predilections of those from whom the advice comes. There are generally one or two members whose advice it is safe to follow. I, for instance, never had a moment's hesitation in making any alterations that Millais suggested, and never had cause to regret such alterations afterwards. Once or twice this great artist did me the honour to work on my pictures himself. I always remember the first of these occasions, partly because it was in the Exhibition of 1869, the first that was held in Burlington House, and partly on account of the charming

model that sat to me for the picture. My picture was called "Celia's Arbour," and was hung on one side of a door in Room No. III. Millais's portrait of Miss Nina Lehman, a young girl seated on a blue China seat, hung on the other side of the door. Millais was working away at his picture and he stepped over to me to pay me some compliment on my work. "What a sweet pretty girl that is of yours," he said, "but why have you made her a married woman? That will never do." The fact was that Miss ——, my model, was engaged to be married when she sat to me, and in fun I had painted a wedding-ring on her finger. Millais then put on the ring a little touch of blue with a high light to it. It was wonderful how the spot of bright blue helped the effect, small though it was. This young lady was one of the most charming models that ever sat, and as good as gold.

In the summer of 1869 I made some studies from her for the figures of two princesses whom Sir Edwin Landseer wished to introduce into a picture of a scene at Osborne. I was helping him at the time with this picture, painting sundry accessories in it for him. She sat in Sir Edwin's garden for these studies, and she told him that her mother had once sat to him at the Duke of Abercorn's house in the country. I believe she said that her mother was the wife of the Duke's game-keeper, and that at the time she was acting as foster-mother to one of the Duke's infant sons. Landseer remembered the incident quite well, and after hunting in a drawer produced the identical



sketch. It represented a very pretty young girl nursing a baby. Miss —— was married shortly after these sittings, and Sir Edwin gave her as a wedding present a pretty little silver palette and brushes, made into a brooch, with the colours on it rendered in coral, lapis-lazuli, ivory, etc. The last thing that she did before she gave up sitting was to go round to all her artist friends and collect a handsome subscription for poor old Christie, the model, who was in bad health and very distressed circumstances at that time. I never saw her after she was married, but I know that she had a good husband, and I am sure that he had a good wife.



## CHAPTER XXV

### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

“THE Council of the Royal Academy have the entire direction and management of all the business of the Society.” They have also. “to frame all new laws, but these shall have no force till ratified by the consent of the General Assembly, and the approbation of the Sovereign.” So say the laws of the institution, and at first sight it seems plain enough; but nevertheless considerable friction has from time to time arisen concerning the mutual rights and duties of the two bodies. For though the Council has to “frame” all new laws, the General Assembly can, by resolutions, make new laws and alter old ones. New laws made by resolutions of the General Assemblies have in their turn to be submitted to the Council to be “framed,” whatever that may mean, and when thus framed they have again to be brought before the General Assembly for confirmation, and afterwards laid before the Sovereign for approbation and signature before finally becoming laws of the Academy. Like the ball in a lively rally at lawn tennis, the laws are often passed several times backwards and

forwards from one body to another, with various amendments and curtailments before the final score is made.

The first serious fight for the supremacy between the General Assembly and the Council took place in the year 1803, a full account of which may be found in "The Royal Academy and its Members" by J. E. Hodgson, R.A., and Sir Frederick Eaton, page 172. The dispute was referred to King George the Third and was settled by him in favour of the Council, but as a matter of fact the conflict between the two bodies has never really been satisfactorily put to rest. A battle took place, on the point, when I served on my first Council in 1877, during Sir Francis Grant's Presidency, and it was hotly debated until the year 1880. In that year the sudden and tragic death of the Treasurer, Mr E. M. Barry, took place during a meeting of the Council, while the point in dispute was being discussed. Barry took great interest in the debate, and had just risen to support the claims of the Council, when he suddenly fell forward on the table, and expired, in a fit of apoplexy. My friend, Mr Marks, witnessed the scene which was perhaps the most painful and dramatic that ever occurred within the walls of the Academy. The friction still simmers a little at times, but I think the supremacy of the General Assembly is, on the whole, considered by the majority of the members as fairly well established.

There are on an average, I should say, about seven General Assemblies in the year. Those

that are held on the 1st, 5th, and 10th of December are permanent fixtures. On the 1st of December the Members and those Associates who have served in the Schools as Visitors for the year meet to vote on the students' works in the competitions for the various prizes and medals. The drawings, models, and paintings are hung in different rooms; they are all numbered, and a printed form of the various competitions is given to each Academician and Associate, on which the numbers of the works selected are marked by the voters. A preliminary examination has been held by the Council at which any works of distinct inferiority are withdrawn from competition. The admission of Associates who had served for the year as Visitors in the Schools, to the adjudication of the prizes was obtained as the result of a motion of my own. Shortly before I became a member the Academy had conferred on the Associates the privilege of teaching in the Schools, and I argued that if an Associate were deemed competent to teach, he was certainly equally competent to decide on the merits of the work done under his tuition. There was some opposition to the motion, for at that time the laws said distinctly, that no Associate should take part in any of the "business" of the Institution, but nevertheless it was carried by a good majority and became law.

The Members and Associates are admitted at ten o'clock on the morning of the 1st of December and have from then to four o'clock



in which to examine the students' works and to mark on the printed forms the numbers of those for which they decide to vote. These papers when thus marked and duly signed are then placed in a locked ballot box, which is not opened until the morning of the distribution of the prizes.

On the 5th of December the General Assembly meets, for the reception of any newly-elected Royal Academicians, who sign the Roll of membership on this occasion, for the nomination of the Council for the ensuing year ; for the election of Visitors, or Teachers, in the various Schools, of painting, drawing, modelling, and architecture ; for the election of two scrutineers to examine the voting papers that have been filled up by the members and Associates, and placed in the ballot box at their meeting on the 1st December, and, finally, for any other business that may be on hand at the time.

This meeting, like most of the General Assemblies, takes place in the evening at eight o'clock. It is rather a wearisome affair, lasting generally for two hours. It is relieved a little by the ceremony of receiving the newly-elected Academicians, if there are any. Chairs are placed for them, in front of the President, at the table. The roll of parchment, on which all the Academicians, commencing with Sir Joshua Reynolds, have signed their names since the foundation of the Institution in 1769, is produced, and duly signed by the new members ; after which their Diplomas, which have been signed by the



Sovereign, are handed to them by the President. They then take their seats among the others as full R.A.'s. Until a Member has received his Diploma at this ceremony he is only styled "R.A. elect" and cannot attend the Assemblies or serve on the Council.

In the election of Visitors there is some excitement as to who heads the poll. The eleven who have the highest number of votes are the elected Visitors; the rest are placed, according to their numbers, on what is called the super-numerary list. From this list Visitors can be obtained to supply the place of any elected Visitors who may be prevented by illness, or other cause, from serving for their month.

The chief business for which the General Assembly is held on the 10th of December is the annual distribution of the prizes to the students, and, if the year is one in which the Gold Medals are competed for, to hear the President deliver a discourse to the students. No. III. room is prepared on this occasion with seats for the students and for those persons who have obtained cards of admission from their friends among the members. Opposite to these seats, on a raised platform, are chairs for the Members and Associates with the President's rostrum in the centre. Before entering the large room the President and the Academicians meet in the Assembly Room to receive the report of the scrutineers and to ascertain the names of the respective prize-winners; after which they enter the room where the students

are assembled, and the distribution of the prizes commences. At the present day it is a very brilliant and "full dress" affair, for it is lit up by the presence of numerous young girls among the students; and the seats in front of the students, for which cards of admission have to be obtained, are generally fully occupied.

It was a far rougher and noisier function in the days when the unemotional Eastlake delivered his erudite discourses, when the popular recipients of the prizes and medals had to run the gauntlet of violent smacks on the back on their way up to, and on their return from, the President. I may be wrong, but I cannot help thinking the students then were more enthusiastic and certainly more demonstrative than they are now, when the majority of the awards are gained by young girls.

There are not, I imagine, many men now living who can say that they breakfasted several times with a man who was present at the Academy when Sir Joshua Reynolds gave away the prizes to the students and delivered his last discourse to them. I am very proud to say that I have done so. Samuel Rogers, the poet, was an intimate friend of my father's, and he gave him an account of that memorable 10th of December, and of how at the conclusion of the discourse, as Reynolds descended from the platform, Burke stepped forward, and taking his hand, said:—

"The angel ended, and in Adam's ear  
So charming left his voice, that he a while  
Thought him still speaking, and stood still to hear."

There are few books in my library that I value more than a beautifully bound copy of the poet's own works, in which is written, in the smallest of handwriting on the fly leaf, "George Leslie, from his sincere friend, Samuel Rogers." My first meeting with Rogers was at Broadstairs when I was five years old, on which occasion he lifted me up to see some chickens that were feeding on the other side of a wall. The last occasion was when I was seventeen or eighteen years old, at his house overlooking the Green Park.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES—*continued*

To return to the distribution of the prizes at the Academy. When the President has finished his address to the students the Members withdraw to the Assembly Room where the President, taking off the gold chain and medal, the insignia of his office, resigns his rule and leaves the room.

The Keeper then takes the vacant chair, and the members proceed to elect a President for the following year. Each one writes the name of the member for whom he wishes to vote on a piece of paper, and I believe, that with only one exception since the foundation of the Academy, the President who has just resigned has been again elected unanimously. The story that on one of these occasions Fuseli voted for Mary Moser, in the place of West, saying that he thought "One old woman as good as another," has been proved by Sir Frederick Eaton to be apocryphal, as no vote is thus recorded in the minute books; but that there is some foundation for a story that has been so continuously handed down I have no doubt. Most probably the truth is that Fuseli gave



out, in a jocular and boastful way, before the election, his intention of doing so.

There are as a rule two General Assemblies held every year for the election of new Members and Associates. At these assemblies the Associates are also present, and have precisely the same voting power as the Academicians. This privilege was conferred on the Associates when Sir Francis Grant succeeded to the Presidency, or very shortly afterwards. Some of the Associates at that time were much opposed to this concession, in so far as it applied to the elections of Academicians. They felt that it would be extremely invidious and unpleasant to be present at an election of one of their own body to the higher honour. The objection was not, however, entertained by the majority of the Associates, and though for several years within my own recollection, some of the more sensitive Associates conscientiously abstained from voting on these occasions, the feeling has gradually died out, and all now attend the elections freely and willingly. It is painful, it is true, to be present as an Associate when the votes are being counted by the President. I speak from personal experience, for in the year 1876 Sir Edward Poynter, Sir John Gilbert, and myself were elected Academicians on the same evening. I came on the final ballot against both my competitors and endured the painful thrill of hearing the little cork balls counted, one by one, by the President, on three separate occasions; on the last of these, I confess, my heart beat

with some rapidity. What made it perhaps worse was that Sir George Gilbert Scott, who sat next me, kept teasing me, rather unkindly I thought, all the time the balls were being counted.

After the result has been declared, in the election of an Academician, if the member elected is present, a general rush is made to shake hands and congratulate him, his recent opponent on the ballot being among the foremost to do so. Though the method of procedure at an Academy election has been already described by others a short account of it may not be out of place here.

As the members and Associates enter the Academy each signs his name in a book kept for the purpose. They then go up into an ante-room, next to the room in which the election will take place. There they have tea or coffee and a brief conversation with one another. On the arrival of the President they file into the election room and take their seats as they like. The President, with the Secretary on his right, and the Keeper and Treasurer on his left, is on a raised platform, with a table in front of him, on which is a square basket for the reception of the voting papers. The ballot box is also on this table. The book with the names of the attending members in it is in front of the President. There is to the right of the table a large blackboard with a lump of chalk by it. After the minutes of the last meeting have been read by the Secretary and confirmed, the President announces the purpose of the meeting,

and papers with the list of candidates printed on them are distributed by the Secretary, the Keeper, and the Treasurer to all the electors. On these each member marks with a pencil the name of the candidate for whom he wishes to vote. The papers are folded up, and in a very short time they are all placed in the square basket aforesaid. The President rises and enquires whether every one has voted, and then proceeds to read out the names selected. The numbers are taken down, severally, by the Secretary, the Keeper, and the Treasurer. Most of those present make lists of their own at the same time. In this first preliminary "scratching," as it is termed, the votes are very much scattered, a great number of candidates receiving one, two, or more votes; but when the result is finally determined, the names of all the candidates who have more than four votes are written in a bold hand on the blackboard by the Secretary. From these selected names a second elimination is made. The papers are again distributed to the electors, who may then only vote for one of the candidates whose names appear upon the blackboard.

When these second papers have been given in and read by the President, and the numbers have been, as before, checked and declared, the names of the two candidates who have received the greatest number of votes are written on cards and placed over the "yes" and "no" on the ballot box. The little drawers of this are emptied, replaced, and locked by the President, who then



proceeds to call out the names of the members present, from the book in which they have been signed; each as he goes up receives from the President's hand a cork ball, and places it in the ballot box to right or left as he chooses. When every one has voted, the President opens one of the drawers and counts the balls deliberately one at a time. It is easy to count the number of electors present, and so, directly the counting of the first box is over, all are at once aware of the final result. The number of electors present generally averages about 43 or 44, so that 21 balls would lose—23 balls would win; and if 44 were present 22 balls would indicate a dead heat. During the counting of the first drawer, the excitement and silence are intense, but the instant that it is finished there is a confused murmur of muffled applause, which renders the counting of the second drawer almost inaudible. If the election is of an Academician, the congratulatory shaking of hands takes place, and if it is of an Associate, one of the electors, a friend of the new Associate, leaves the room to communicate the intelligence to the models, who generally attend outside the Academy on these evenings, and who race off to the house of the new Associate to impart the good news and receive the customary reward.

Two or even three elections often take place on the same evening. The time taken in a single election is generally about half an hour; three on the same night would occupy about an hour and a quarter. If time permits after the elections are



over, and if there is other business to be done, the Academicians retire to the Assembly Room and hold a separate meeting for the transaction of it.

Election nights are all very much alike, and I remember little worth recording about them, with the exception of the excitement that took place in the year 1879, when a lady narrowly missed being elected an Associate—Lady Butler or, as she was then, Miss Elizabeth Thompson, actually having had her name on the ballot box, and having been beaten by her opponent by two votes only. One more vote in her favour would have resulted in a dead heat, and, if this had occurred, I have often wondered how Lord Leighton would have given his casting vote. He was a great admirer of the works of the other candidate, but would not his gallantry have prevailed over his artistic instinct? This event gave rise to a series of animated debates in the General Assemblies. The ladies had already obtained a strong foothold in the Schools, and now the “*Patres conscripti*” of the Society were much alarmed at the idea of a possible invasion into the very hearts of their own ranks. There was no law against the election of women; indeed, two women had actually been Royal Academicians at the foundation of the Institution. Members considered the difficulty of the treatment of women after they had been elected; for instance, they might choose to come to the banquet, possibly one solitary lady would come! Would she have to be escorted in to the dinner? And

if so, by whom? The President has to escort the highest Royal personage that attends the banquet. Would the Royal personage himself escort the lady? Would ladies be eligible to serve on the Council?—or to serve as Visitors? Might we not some day even have a female President? And if not, why not?

At any rate, against such an eventuality, it was as well to be prepared, and a number of small laws were added to the code specially adapted to meet the emergency. The privileges to which female members are eligible are stated in nine short clauses; but the framers of these clauses were silent as to all those privileges which are reserved exclusively for members of the male sex, admission to the banquet being one of these. Luckily the danger passed away, and no necessity has since arisen for the use of the nine short clauses, but I fear that, should such a necessity arise in the near future, they will be found a little too rusty and antiquated to be of much use.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE ACADEMY DINNERS

ROYAL Academicians are very liberally represented in the Athenæum Club. Many of them are elected by the Committee under Rule II. without the long period of waiting to which ordinary candidates are liable. On the night of an election at the Royal Academy, or on any evening when a General Assembly takes place, it has become a custom for a number of the Academicians to dine together at the club before attending the meeting at the Academy, and these little dinners are very pleasant. Much talk naturally goes on at them concerning the coming business, but the conversation generally is of a light and versatile character.

I do not know whether the custom is still kept up, but when I was a member of the Arts Club in Hanover Square, those members of the Academy who were members of the Club, together with many artists who were outside the pale of the Academy, used to make a practice of dining together on the nights of the elections. The members of the Academy, after the election was over, returned to the Club, when, if the

election had been that of an Associate, and if the lucky man happened also to be a member of the club and present on the occasion, he was expected to stand champagne to all assembled, his health being proposed and drunk with much pomp and cheering.

There is another club to which almost every Member and Associate of the Academy belongs at some time of his career. It was established, I believe, very soon after the foundation of the Academy, and it is called "The Academy Club." Membership is confined exclusively to the Academicians and Associates of the Royal Academy. It has no house or home of its own, though it has a secretary and a treasurer; the annual subscription is very moderate, and its members dine together several times during the year. Two guests can be invited by each member. Some of these dinners take place during the winter months, and one on the first Monday in May; this was in my time always a whitebait dinner at Greenwich. There is also an excursion into the country during the summer. This latter festivity is perhaps the pleasantest meeting of all. A place in the country is selected which has, in its vicinity, some object of archæological interest, in the midst, if possible, of beautiful scenery. Windsor, Sevenoaks (with Knole close by), Oxford, the Thames at Taplow, Chigwell in Epping Forest, and similar places have thus been visited. The Secretary and a small Committee make the necessary arrangements for the outing.



Each member pays for his own and his guests' dinners, the only authorised toasts on these occasions are "The Sovereign," and "Glory and honour to the next Royal Academy Exhibition." This last, I was told, dated from the days of Sir Joshua himself. Turner was a very popular member of this club in his time. He loved nothing better than little festive gatherings of his brother artists. My father related a story of how, at one of these dinners, Turner paid the bill for the whole company. Chantrey was Secretary of the club at the time, and after dinner, when the bill was brought to him, Chantrey in fun handed it over to Turner, saying, "Here, Turner, you have plenty of money, pay this little account for us." Turner was generally supposed to be of a miserly disposition, but to the astonishment of every one he produced his cheque-book and paid the score. Chantrey and the others begged him not to do so, saying that it was only a joke; but Turner insisted on paying. He said he had enjoyed the dinners and the company of the club so much and so often that he was quite happy to pay up on this occasion.

The custom of celebrating the commencement of any great undertaking by a dinner is so eminently characteristic of the Englishman that we are not surprised that on the opening of the first Exhibition of the Royal Academy a dinner was given in honour of the event, at the St Alban's Tavern, on the 26th of April 1769. Sir Joshua Reynolds presided, and a few distinguished guests were invited. It is most probable that the cost

of this dinner, which was of a private character, was defrayed by a subscription from the member's themselves. The first regular official Academy dinner took place in the large room at Somerset House on St George's Day, 23rd April 1771. Besides the members of the new institution, twenty-five guests were present by invitation. From that time until the present these dinners have been held annually. In the earlier years there appears to have been very little method used in issuing the invitations, but after a time it was found that the rooms became inconveniently crowded, and the dignity of the feast was thereby impaired. A rule was therefore passed in 1804 which limited the number of guests to one hundred and twenty, and it was further enacted that only "persons in elevated situations, of high rank, distinguished talent, or known patrons of the arts" should be invited; each person proposed should also be balloted for by the members of the Council present, two black balls to exclude. These regulations have been adhered to ever since, with the exception that the number of the guests invited has been increased to two hundred.

Formerly, the annual dinners were considered to be of a strictly private character; and no reporters for the press were admitted to them until the year 1851, when, during the Presidency of Sir Charles Eastlake, the Prince Consort honoured the Academy by his presence at the banquet. A representative of the *Times* was invited on this occasion, and from that time to the present reports of the list of guests and of

the speeches have regularly appeared in the press.

In the period of the Regency hard drinking was the rule rather than the exception, and the tables at the latter end of the feast must have presented an appearance very different from that which characterises them now. Very many of the guests then would, no doubt, have been seen on the floor of the room, more or less in a blissful state of semi-unconsciousness, in which they probably remained until their servants arrived to attend them safely to their homes.

My father related of John Kemble that, at the very commencement of the dinner, he used deliberately to avow his intention. "Charles," he would say to his brother, "there is no play to-night, let us get drunk." And on one occasion, when John had very successfully accomplished his intention, and was reposing on the floor beside the Duke of Norfolk, he addressed his neighbour in high flown style with the following taunting harangue. "You are a noble duke. My sister, Mrs Siddons, and I belong to God Almighty's nobility ;

"What can ennoble knaves and thieves and cowards ?  
Alas ! not all the blood of all the Howards."

The difference between the two men, when overcome by wine was peculiar ; John Kemble became very talkative but remembered nothing that he had uttered afterwards, whereas the Duke, though reduced to absolute silence at the time, would have a perfect recollection on the



following day of everything that had occurred. John Kemble, on being told the next day of his unfortunate blunder, only remarked, "Well, he has heard the truth for once in his life—at any rate."

My father was not present himself at the dinner when the above event took place, but he had it direct from one of his brother members who was present.

It is much to be regretted that, during the first eighty years of the existence of the Royal Academy, no regular lists of the names of the guests who were invited to its annual dinners were preserved in its records. The only means we have, therefore, of learning anything on the subject is from that which has been handed down to us orally, or from what we may gather from the writings of some of the earlier members of the institution. My father, in his "Autobiographical Recollections," gives a charming account of Scott's speech when in 1828 he paid a visit to London and dined with the Academy, and had his health proposed in the most flattering terms by Lawrence. The ovation that Sir Walter received was tremendous, the applause for a considerable time preventing him from speaking. He made a dainty and characteristic if a rather short reply. It was the last time my father ever saw Scott whom he had painted at Abbotsford six years before.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE ACADEMY DINNERS—*continued*

THE first things connected with the Academy dinners of which I have any recollection were sundry little cakes, which my father would bring home from the feast for my sister Mary and myself, and place by our bedsides where we used to find them the next morning with great delight. As the Academy dinners in those days commenced punctually at six o'clock, my father would dress for the festivity quite early in the afternoon, and there were few things we children enjoyed more than in watching him during this operation. He was very particular about the arrangement of his white tie, which was large and long, going three times round his neck before it came to the bow. As we grew older, we used to enjoy very much hearing him talk of the great people he had seen at the dinner, and of the speeches they had made. How little I dreamed in those days that in the future I should, in the same way, talk over the guests at the Academy dinners to children of my own.

The first Academy dinner to which I went myself was in the year 1868, and it was the

last that was held in the old building in Trafalgar Square. The East Room in which we dined was extremely crowded, and there was only one door to it. As the youngest Associate, my seat was close to this door; through it the waiters were constantly going in and out, and it was quite the noisiest corner of the room, but during the speeches a curtain was drawn over the door, and my old friend, "Little Bob," the red-haired porter, was stationed at it to prevent any one from passing whilst a speech was going on. I regret to say that poor little Bob managed to get inebriated, which led now and then to various noisy but amusing interludes. At one time Mr Knight, the Secretary, came round himself to restore quiet. I believe it was the year before this, in 1867, that, in order to obtain more room, the Associates dined by themselves in the Middle Room, coming into the big room afterwards, like good children, to dessert, so that they might hear the speeches. This arrangement was by no means agreeable to the Associates, and it was not repeated. When the Academy entered into possession of its new home in Burlington House, of course there was plenty of room for everybody. The large room in which the dinner is now held has three doors, the one which leads into Room No. II. being that most used by the waiters. Curtains are drawn over all the doors to keep out draughts, and the rule that no one is allowed to pass through any of the doors during the time a speech is being delivered still holds good.

The length of the room is from east to west, and the principal table is placed in front of the north wall. From this there are a number of spur-tables across the room. The President's seat is in the centre of the long table, the Royal personages and most illustrious of the guests being seated on either side. In order to arrange the seating of the guests in due precedence, the Council have a plan of the tables, drawn to scale, laid before them. One point of a pair of compasses is placed on the President's seat, and with the other a number of circles are drawn equi-distant from one another, over all the tables. The seats within each circle are considered as of equivalent honour in order of precedence. A newly-elected Associate takes his first seat within the orbit of the largest outer circle, and year by year his seat is advanced in honour from circle to circle, until, at last, perhaps as one of the senior Academicians, he occupies a seat within the circle which has the President's chair for its centre. This gradual promotion is very pleasant at first, but it grows a little uncanny as the last circle is approached, for from that high latitude many well remembered old faces must of necessity be missed. It is appalling to reflect that more than seventy years have passed since I first ate the little cakes which my father brought home from the banquet for we children, and that in 1913 I dined within the innermost and last circle of all.

During the months of March and April the



Council meets frequently, much of their time in the evenings being taken up by the business of issuing the invitations to the dinner. Last year's list of invited guests is perused and revised; many of the names upon it are omitted from the new list, and fresh ones are substituted. A first batch of invitations is despatched, and in a short time answers to them begin to arrive. Amongst them will, no doubt, be several refusals, and these, of course, make vacancies that have to be filled up. When a sufficient number of vacancies has accumulated the members of the Council have each in turn the right of nominating some distinguished person whom they may think eligible for an invitation. The person so nominated has to be balloted for, as have all the names of the invited guests. Sometimes vacancies occur in sufficient numbers to allow a second nomination to each member of the Council. I have always felt rather proud at having proposed the name of Sir John Tenniel as my first nomination for the dinner in 1877. It was the first time that Mr Punch made his appearance in person at the Royal Academy, and I am happy to say that from that year until the present one, one or more distinguished representatives of that dear old gentleman have annually graced our board by their presence.

The list of guests at an Academy dinner probably surpasses in its comprehensiveness that of any other annual gathering or dinner,



either public or private, in the United Kingdom. For besides those of the Royal personages and foreign ambassadors, the Governing Ministry and the leaders of the Opposition, the House of Lords and the leading patrons of art there will be found in it the names of the highest representatives of the Church, of the Army and Navy, of the Law, of the heads of the civic authorities of London, of the Universities, of the Colleges of Medicine and Surgery, of the Presidents of all the various societies and institutions of science and art, of the heads of departments in the British Museum, and last, but by no means least, the names also of the most brilliant leaders in the paths of Literature, the Drama, and Music. Yet it is still nominally a private dinner at which the hosts are the President and the members of the Royal Academy — a dinner given by them to celebrate the opening of what may be fairly considered as the best of the year's work of the artists of the United Kingdom.

I have been present at every dinner at the Royal Academy since my election as an Associate, but I regret very much that, never having kept a regular diary, I am obliged to rely on my memory for such accounts as I can give of the speeches I have heard, and of the conversations I have enjoyed with the various distinguished persons to whom I have sat next on these celebrated occasions. To Sir Frederick Eaton I owe the pleasure of having had repeatedly

a Bishop or other dignitary of the Church as my neighbour. He knew that I was an orthodox son of the Church of England, and I have no doubt that, in the arrangement of the seating of the guests, he must have reminded the different Councils of this fact. I have found the Bishops at all times most delightful and interesting talkers, and in particular I have very pleasant recollections of three occupants of the See of Peterborough—Creighton, Magee, and the present holder. Twice I had Archbishop Tait for a neighbour, and twice I sat next the present Bishop of London; once I was seated next to Dean Stanley and once next to the Archbishop of York, Dr Thomson. Archbishop Tait had formerly been headmaster of Rugby, at which famous school my dear friend John Hodgson was educated. After dinner Hodgson came over to where we were talking, and spoke to the Bishop, asking if he remembered him at Rugby; to my astonishment he knew him in an instant, addressing him by name. Hodgson told me that he had heard that Tait could always recall the name of any boy that he had had under his care at school when he chanced to meet him in after life. Hodgson, however, had strongly marked features, and had been high in the sixth form before he left.

Dr Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, was next to me on an occasion when he had been asked to respond for one of the toasts. I think I never saw any one so nervous and depressed

as he was as his turn for speaking approached ; he seemed to be in a profuse perspiration, and made no secret of his discomfort. But the instant that he commenced to deliver his speech he apparently became another being, making one of the most animated and wittiest speeches of the evening. I have heard that even the readiest and most fluent speakers have a dread of responding to a toast at an Academy dinner. It is the extraordinary combination of talent and intellect which characterises the audience on these occasions that appals even the most daring. The speaker feels that in the room there is sure to be some skilled expert, who knows more than he does, on any subject about which he may venture to discourse.

On the evening of the dinner many of the guests arrive quite early at the Academy in order to have a quiet look round at the pictures in the comparatively empty rooms. There is no formal reception by the President and Council, though the President and Secretary are generally to be seen near the head of the staircase in order to receive the Royal personages as they arrive. Since the formation of the Artists Volunteer Corps a detachment of it, with its band, is posted in the quadrangle to act as a guard of honour.

I always myself arrive as early as I can so that I can have a good look at the various guests as they arrive. By coming early, too, one sometimes sees curious things. Not a few of the most distinguished guests, who are aged

and afflicted with gout, have their own dinners brought for them by their servants—probably dishes selected under their doctor's directions. I remember that both Lord Granville and Lord Beaconsfield were so specially favoured.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ACADEMY DINNERS—*continued*

THE Royal people and their equerries are always attended at the dinners by royal footmen—four or five of whom look very conspicuous at the entertainment in their scarlet uniforms, powdered hair, and red cloaks.

It was, no doubt, partly owing to these royal footmen that I once had the honour (?) of being mistaken for the late King of the Belgians. It was a good many years ago, and His Majesty was not so notorious then as he afterwards became. I had often been told by my friends about that time that I bore considerable resemblance to King Leopold, for then I wore my beard long. I had been talking to my friend Mr Marks near the head of the staircase, and was holding my blue covered catalogue across my shirt front in such a way that it looked something like the ribbon of the Garter. There was a rumour that the King, who was then in England, might come to the Academy banquet, and one or two of these royal footmen were standing behind me at the time when Lord Dufferin came rather quickly up the staircase.

As he reached the top he caught sight of me, and, making a profound bow, held out his hand, which I shook. He seemed a little disconcerted when he perceived his mistake. We neither of us said anything, and he passed on, with a look round at me afterwards. Mr Marks asked me who he was, to which I replied, "Lord Dufferin." "Do you know him?" "Yes," said I, "but he does not know me."

I have gradually learnt to distinguish the greater number of the celebrities, but they are for ever changing, and I have frequently had the mortification of coming away from the Academy without having even seen some remarkable person who has been present at the dinner.

The hour before the dinner commences is to me by far the most interesting and enjoyable part of the whole entertainment. There is no crowding at any time; the guests move freely about, conversing and chatting together. Without the slightest fear of being thought impertinent or obtrusive, one has plenty of opportunity of studying the features of great men hitherto known only through the pages of Mr Punch and the illustrated papers. The dignity and glamour of Mr Gladstone's head, with his piercing eagle eye, at once accounted to me for the marvellous power he had over the hearts and minds of his followers; by contrast, his made all other faces around look somewhat commonplace; though I must confess it inspired me more with awe than with love. I saw once, during this waiting hour, John Bright engaged in an eager and

animated conversation with King Edward the Seventh (then Prince of Wales), who seemed listening with the deepest attention to every word that fell from the lips of the distinguished statesman.

Cardinal Manning, in exquisite violet silk, and afterwards the tall and imposing figure of Cardinal Vaughan, in brilliant cardinal red, gave touches of colour and picturesqueness to the scene. Whenever any members of their Church met either of these dignitaries they saluted them on bended knee, kissing their hands. It seemed to carry one back in imagination to the sixteenth century, to the days of Leo the Tenth and Benvenuto Cellini. At one time could be seen the portly form of Lord Salisbury, at another the pallid and mysterious face of Lord Beaconsfield. Then there were the great soldiers — in my earlier days the heroes who had fought in the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny, and in my later, the bronzed warriors who had just returned from the Boer War in Africa. Of all the striking faces, I have always thought that, as a class, those of the eminent doctors and surgeons were the most attractive, and it is pleasant to remember that John Hunter himself had been a guest at many of these dinners in the days of Sir Joshua.

Of the many remarkable speeches that I have heard at Academy dinners, I have no hesitation in saying that the one delivered by Charles Dickens in 1870, in response to the toast of "Literature," was by far the most eloquent and impressive. One



of his and our oldest and dearest friends, Daniel Maclise, had but a few weeks before passed away from us, and in the tribute to his memory every word that Dickens uttered seemed to pass straight from his heart to the hearts of the listeners. There was a hush of absolute silence for a few moments as he finished, and it was followed by a muffled murmur of applause. But Dickens possessed extraordinary histrionic powers; and his son informed me that, as was his custom on all important occasions, this speech had been written and carefully studied beforehand. It was the last public speech that he delivered, and possibly the finest.

I have heard it said that there is no toast, their response to which His Majesty's Ministers so much dread as that of their healths at an Academy dinner. They have to appear in the best of spirits, and are expected to say something witty or playful, perhaps at a time when the dread of an immediate dissolution or some other parliamentary trouble may be filling their hearts with anxiety and dismay. They have very little material with which to concoct the brilliant epigrams that are expected of them, for politics are quite out of place at such a gathering. If they venture on the debateable territories of Art, their path is beset with pitfalls on every side: and yet they feel bound, if possible, to introduce some sort of reference to Art into their speeches.

One is not surprised that under such circum-



stances a Prime Minister often shirks the duty by absenting himself from the gathering, and leaves the task of response to one of his immediate subordinates. Mr Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Beaconsfield all passed through the ordeal with great ability and success, though, in my opinion, Lord Granville, when Minister for Foreign Affairs, excelled the three in finished polish of delivery, in appropriateness of allusion, and in unaffected simplicity of manner.

I only heard Mr Gladstone once many years ago, when I was still an Associate; I believe it was the only occasion on which he spoke at the Academy dinner. To me his voice, though extremely powerful and expressive, sounded rather rough and grating. His speech, too, I thought lacked the light sparkle that one expects at an Academy dinner. Lord Salisbury's speech was witty enough, and appropriate in subject; his delivery was good, but not in any way remarkable.

I heard Lord Beaconsfield speak on two occasions at the Academy, the first being very shortly after we had moved into Burlington House, and the second in one of the later years of Lord Leighton's Presidency. On the latter occasion, his speech was clever to the last degree; he wandered into the realms of Art with great skill, speaking of Pericles and the great epoch of Greek Sculpture. A delicate strain of slightly sarcastic humour ran through all he said, and was most delightful to listen

to. His delivery was peculiar; like the dead beat of the escapement of a clock, he dropped each word he uttered, separate and distinct, into the ears of his audience. Though his voice was not powerful, I believe that every one in the room heard with ease every word that he said. I sat at no great distance from him; he looked pale and worn, and though he now and then said something with a slight smile to his neighbour, he remained for the most part pensive and quiet during the whole feast.

The audience at an Academy dinner is usually a closely interested and attentive one; I can recall only two occasions on which its patience became exhausted on account of the prolixity of the speakers. The toast of the "Army and Navy," like that of the "Sovereign," being regularly on the list at every festive gathering throughout the British Empire, is not one that, in a dinner like that at the Academy, demands more than a few words, either of proposal or response. Unfortunately, however, Lord Wolseley, in replying to this toast, took the opportunity of expatiating at too great a length on some shortcomings of the War Office which at the time possessed his mind, and as a consequence the latter part of his speech was received by the audience with considerable demonstrations of impatience, through which the gallant soldier, with characteristic pluck, fought on until he had quite finished all he wished to say. The second occasion was when Professor Owen, in returning thanks for the toast of "Science," got carried away into the dim regions

of Palæontology, and wandered on until his voice became inaudible owing to the talking, coughing, and clattering of knives and forks from all sides of the room. It was rather painful, but I believe the dear old Professor was quite unconscious of the interruptions.

At the present time I think the speeches are not quite so long as they used to be; and the guests certainly leave the tables rather earlier, for formerly the speeches were interleaved, so to speak, with glees and madrigals sung by three or four professional singers; these of late years have been superseded by the band of the Royal Artillery, which at the close of the speeches plays in the lecture-room, and thither many of the guests adjourn to listen to their excellent performance.

In 1913 I stayed to the very last enjoying the music; everybody else had left the Academy as I walked down the staircase with my old friend Sir Edward Poynter, preceded by one of the bandsmen carrying a huge double bass on his shoulders.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE PROPERTY OF THE ACADEMY

ONE of the first and by no means least interesting duties which a newly-elected member has to perform on entering his service on the Council is that of inspection of the property of the Academy.

“The duty of the Committee of Inspection shall be to examine all the property of the Academy, accompanied by the Keeper and Librarian, each in his own department, and to report thereon not later than the month of December in each year to the Council, notifying all deficiencies in it, and suggesting such necessary precautions for its better preservation as they may think required.”

So says the rule. There ought strictly to be four members of this Committee, two from the senior half of the Council, and two from the junior half, newly-elected members, if any, serving on this second half; but it is not always easy to obtain four disengaged members at that



time of the year, and one senior and one junior member are generally considered to be a quorum.

Apart from its invested funds the Academy possesses a large amount of interesting and valuable property. It has, besides, the Library and the Diploma works, many interesting relics in the way of furniture, plate, sketches by distinguished members, as well as several palettes, brushes, and other implements used by them. There are also many interesting portraits of various members which have from time to time been presented to the Institution. Catalogues and inventories of all these things are kept, and these are produced for the Committee's use on the occasion of the inspection. After a member has been elected it has been from the earliest times the custom for him to present to the Academy a piece of silver plate for the use of the Society. The spoons, forks, salt-cellars, mustard pots, etc., used at the dinners and lunches of the Council and on various other occasions, will all be found on inspection to have the names of the donor members, with the date of the gift, inscribed upon them. Some of this old silver is very beautiful in design. On the Council table, a large and very handsome silver inkstand, the gift of Sir Joshua Reynolds, is always placed in front of the President's seat. Two others, made in exact imitation of Sir Joshua's, and two smaller ones, also of the same pattern, the gifts of different members, are on other parts of the table. The candlesticks and a large and very

handsome silver snuff-box on this table are also gifts from members.

The library contains a vast number of valuable works on art of every description, which have been presented or purchased from time to time. In it is also placed Michael Angelo's very beautiful unfinished marble bas-relief, of the "Madonna with the infant Christ and St John"—St John is holding a little bird in his hands. In the Diploma Gallery are the easel and two chairs that belong to Sir Joshua Reynolds, together with his diploma. In the anteroom, between the Council chamber and the Secretary's room, are glazed cases, in which are a number of interesting relics of various sorts, sketches and letters by different distinguished members—the graving tool used by Thomas Bewick, a penknife that belonged to Gainsborough, a curious old tea-caddy, formerly the property of Sir Joshua, an old book of woodcuts, by Jost Ammon (which also once belonged to Sir Joshua, with his autograph and stamp in it), and many other objects of similar character and equal interest.

By far the most valuable picture in the possession of the Academy is the fine copy, by Marco d'Oggioni, of Leonardo's "Last Supper." The original painting on the walls of the refectory of the convent of S. Maria della Grazia in Milan has suffered so much from the vicissitudes to which it has been subjected and from the outrages that have been committed on it, that not a trace of Leonardo's own work can

now be seen. The copy which the Academy is fortunate enough to possess was formerly in the Certosa at Pavia; it was painted during Leonardo's lifetime by one of his pupils, and is still in perfect preservation. It has been cleaned and revarnished several times, but the painting has not itself been injured in any way by the process. The varnish that has been used is mastic; this, though in course of time it turns brown and opaque through oxygenation, can always be removed without in any way injuring the firm painting itself, and after such removal the picture will again appear from beneath as fresh and bright as ever. It was thus cleaned in one of the years when my father, as Professor of Painting, lectured at the Academy, 1847-1852. He had the picture hung on the wall behind him during one of his lectures, where it looked simply magnificent. I went with him in the daytime to see it, and can well remember the brilliance of the colouring and the vigour and manliness of the execution. It had had a fresh coat of varnish passed over it which has now again been darkened by time, but I feel sure the beautiful work is still quite unhurt beneath. Of course, when I call this picture the most "valuable" in the possession of the Academy, I mean only its artistic value, not its market price, for the market price of a picture by an Old Master, nowadays, is an entirely fallacious test of value arranged between the dealers and the millionaires.

Among many other paintings that belong to



the Academy, I covet much the sixteen exquisite little studies by John Constable, which hang on the staircase leading up to the Diploma Gallery. I also should be very glad to have the set of copies, by Giuseppe Cades, from the fresco of Raphael in the "Stanze" in the Vatican. These hang mostly in the rooms used by the students, and when I have been a Visitor in the Painting School, I have found them most useful as references for my endeavours to explain the principles of composition and grace of line. There are a set of copies of Raphael's cartoons, by Sir James Thornhill, which formerly hung in the School rooms, but are at present rolled up and stowed away. As the cartoons themselves are now at South Kensington the Council considered that they need no longer cumber the walls of the Schools with these copies, but they are fairly good works, and I think it a pity that they should be lost; possibly some provincial Art School might be found that would be very glad to have them.

The Academy also possesses a number of portraits of deceased members of the Society, of which Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of himself, hanging in the Assembly Room, is by far the finest as a work of art. The portrait of Sir Charles Eastlake by Knight, that of David Roberts by Sir Daniel Macnee, and that of the celebrated line engraver, T. H. Robinson, by Knight, are, as I can testify from recollection, marvellous likenesses. There is also an extremely interesting and characteristic set of fifty - three



pencil drawings of Academicians by G. Dance, among which is one of Turner when a young man, remarkable as being the only portrait of the great landscape painter for which he is known to have given a sitting.

Reynolds's splendid portraits of King George III. and Queen Charlotte hang in the Assembly Room, and are too well known for any mention here.

Three other Royal portraits by Sir Martin Shee, one of Queen Victoria in the Assembly Room, and those of King William the Fourth and King George the Fourth must be well known to many visitors to the Exhibitions, hanging as they do on the staircase which leads to the refreshment rooms.

Framed, and hanging on the same staircase, is a very fine piece of seventeenth - century tapestry. Mr Seymour Lucas, when he was a Visitor, discovered it stowed away in an old drapery box in the Painting School. No one knew to whom it belonged, but I remember seeing it when I was a student, and when I first served as Visitor in 1868. It was extremely dirty when Mr Lucas found it, and at his recommendation the Academy had it cleaned, framed, and glazed. Some Visitor, in remote times, must have taken it to the Academy to serve as a background to his model, and he must have been one of the absent-minded ones, for he evidently forgot all about it afterwards. It was repeatedly used as a background - cloth in the Painting School, generally with the reverse side outside, so that the pattern upon it should not

be too obviously visible. John Pettie often chose this reverse side for a background to the figures he set. The members were very grateful to Mr Lucas for his discovery of it. I have been told that at the present time this handsome piece of work would probably be worth five or six hundred guineas.

There is no need for me to discuss the merits of the sculptures in the Gibson Gallery, for the place is open free to the public, and any one can form his own opinion on them. Gibson, for the greater part of his life, resided and worked in Rome, where he became a sort of king among the sculptors and painters who frequented the Café Greco. He possessed a staunch belief in his own genius. Like Pygmalion, he actually fell in love at times with his own productions, notably in the case of his tinted Venus, about the beauty of which work I once heard him descant to my father in language more like that with which a lover addresses his mistress than that which a workman would use in speaking of his own handicraft. The Gallery containing his works is too crowded, and I am sure that, if Gibson could see it, he would himself gladly have two-thirds of the casts removed, which would allow the remainder, the pick of the lot, to be so arranged that they could be better seen.

Formerly the Gibson and the Diploma Galleries were only occasionally patrolled by the servants of the Institution; but when Mr Calderon became Keeper he discovered that a growing interest in

the works of John Gibson was becoming manifest amongst the students of opposing sexes; little parties of two being frequently seen ascending to the gallery for the purpose of studying the beauty of the figures. He represented this curious fact to the Council, and at his advice an attendant was permanently stationed in the gallery during the time it was open. After this arrangement Gibson's art seemed rapidly to lose all hold over the students' hearts.

Besides the works that remained in his studio at his death, together with a sum of money wherewith to build a gallery for their exhibition, Gibson bequeathed all his personal effects to the Academy; and these effects form a small and interesting collection in themselves. They are seen, however, only once a year, when they are taken from their drawer and carefully arranged, with their inventory, for the inspection of the Committee. After they have been certified to be in order, they are again locked up in their drawer for another year. This part of Gibson's bequest reminds me of the very singular one made in his will by Sir John Soane, of which probably few of my readers may have heard. Soane left several boxes or trunks at his death, strongly corded, and sealed with directions that they should be opened at certain intervals of time—I am not quite sure of how many years—one only at each time, by his trustees, of whom the President of the Academy for the time being was to be one. At present, I believe, two of these boxes have been solemnly and duly opened,

and the contents have been found to consist of nothing more interesting than Sir John's left-off wearing apparel. I do not know how many more boxes remain, or when the next box has to be opened.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### CHARITABLE BEQUESTS BY MEMBERS

It speaks highly for the estimation in which the Academy and the Councils by which its affairs are managed, are held, that, whenever a bequest has been made by the more opulent of our members for the relief of poor artists, or for the purpose of encouraging the fine arts in general, or for exciting the emulation of the students in the Schools, the administration of the funds so bequeathed has invariably been left by the testators entirely in the hands of the President and Council of the Society.

The members who so nobly gave these funds, knew intimately the formation and working of the Councils of the Academy; they knew that there were always to be found in these bodies a majority of honourable and competent men, possessed of sound judgment on all subjects connected with art, artists themselves, and therefore well acquainted with all the wants and vicissitudes incident to the profession—in short, men whom they could thoroughly trust. Actuated by such feelings as these, Sir Francis Chantrey thus left

the administration of his magnificent bequest entirely to the President and the Council of the Royal Academy, and it was in a corresponding feeling of trust that the Turner, the Cousins, and the Redgrave annuities were all left in the hands of the same administration. The sum from which the Redgrave annuities are derived is, it is true, not a direct bequest from the Academician himself, but has generously been given by the members of his family, his son, and his two daughters. They, however, knew well to whose administration their father would have wished the fund to be entrusted, and they accordingly directed that the annuities should be given by the votes of the President and the Council.

Other bequests by members, left for the benefit of the Students and the schools, such as the Armitage and Creswick prizes, and the Landseer Scholarships, are all left to be awarded by the Council and the members of the Academy. Lord Leighton's gift, too, has to be used from time to time as the President and Council may think fit.

The President of the Academy is, *ex officio*, also President of the Artist's General Benevolent Institution, the Council of which is mainly composed of members and Associates of the Academy. It is one of the best managed charities in the United Kingdom, the economy displayed in the control of its working expenses being remarkable. Almost the whole of the large sums obtained at the annual dinners are expended in the

relief of distress. All the Academicians and Associates, without exception, have for many years subscribed generously to the funds of the Institution, and numbers of them have served on its Council and acted as stewards at its annual dinners. Every case of distress that comes before its Council is investigated with the utmost care, and the amounts of relief given have been varied to suit particular exigencies.

A separate fund has been established to afford means of education to the children of deceased artists, the choice of school being left to the guardians of the child, and the success of this branch of the charity has been most satisfactory. Artists are not as a rule considered to be good men of business, but at any rate in the management of their charities I think they may be fairly said to have few equals.

Besides giving moderate pensions to its honorary retired members, as well as to the widows of other members, who may in their old age be in reduced circumstances, the Academy annually devotes a large sum towards the relief of poor artists, who at any time have been exhibitors, or to their widows and children. These donations are voted by the Council twice a year, in the months of February and July. Every case is thoroughly investigated by the Council, and a sad and wearisome work such investigation is. Every application for help has to be accompanied by letters from two persons well acquainted with the case, one of whom has to be a Royal Academician. As these donations are often



continued from year to year to the same candidate, many of them come to be regarded as small annuities.

If Turner's will had been carried out in its entirety, alms - houses would have been built for indigent artists in their old age; the testator wished them to be denominated "Turner's Rest." Unfortunately, the will was contested, and this long - cherished desire of the great landscape painter was never fulfilled. It may be noted, however, that the administration of this charity also was entrusted by Turner to the President and Council of the Royal Academy. There are, I believe, three nice little cottages at Broadstairs, the gift of some generous benefactor, which in a way partake of the character of Turner's projected "rest"; these, too, have been left to the disposal of the President and Council, and are usually given by them as residences to some of the recipients of the Turner or Cousins' annuities. An occupant of one of these cottages, a dear old man, once sent me a small book that he had written on the structure and organs of the spider. He conducted his observations by the help of his niece's young eyes (for he was almost blind himself) and a microscope. The little work was illustrated by photographs, and was extremely interesting.

The names of the recipients of the various charities administered by the Councils of the Royal Academy, as well as of those who receive relief from the Artists' General Benevolent



Fund, are never published. Many of the recipients have at some time of their lives greatly distinguished themselves in their profession, and very rarely indeed have the funds at the disposal of the Academy been applied to fraudulent or undeserving cases.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### NATURAL ENEMIES OF THE ACADEMY

THAT any society of artists, no matter what might be the number of its members, or how they may be elected, or what their qualifications, should give, in the selection and arrangement of an annual exhibition of works of art, satisfaction to every one is, from the very nature of things, absolutely impossible.

When twice as many works as can be decently placed, are sent for exhibition, it follows that at least half of them must suffer rejection. And it also follows that every year rather more than half of those sending pictures to the Academy for exhibition become grievously vexed with the Institution and its management. Not quite so hostile are those whose pictures have been hung in places or lights worse than the senders expected, and considerable grumbling is often heard on this score; whereas, those whose works have been well placed are seldom over thankful, for they consider that they have only been treated according to their desserts.

Hence it is that the Royal Academy has, as my gardener said of peas, "A many henemies."

Amongst others, the ladies and gentlemen who write for the newspapers are, with some few exceptions, remarkable for their persistent abuse of the Academy and all its works. Their notices usually commence with some depreciatory remarks as to the character of the Exhibition as a whole ; it is almost invariably proclaimed to be "below the average." I can never quite make out how the "average" of the Academy Exhibitions is obtained. One year, when the Exhibition was such a good one that even the critics praised it, my old friend, Mr Storey, very wittily remarked, "Yes, it is really the first year since the foundation of the Academy that the Exhibition has been quite up to its average."

Many reasons may be given for the prevalence and persistency of the hostility displayed in the newspaper notices of our annual Exhibitions. It is, for instance, far easier for a writer to condemn a work in a general way than to point out its merits ; for the latter task a certain amount of practical knowledge of the art is required, whereas he who confines himself to condemnation need know little at all on the subject. Like Mulvany he takes the upper ground in manœuvring, and he can write safely with all the prestige of the "superior person." He needs not to enter into any details or to offer any reasons for his opinion. But all these advantages are lost the moment he condescends to praise ; he then sinks at once to the position of a humble admirer of another's genius.

Abuse of the Academy is also sure to

be very gratefully read by numbers of those unfortunates whose works have been rejected, as well as by their still more numerous friends and relations. The circulation of a paper can occasionally even be increased by the publication in its columns of correspondence on the subject of some particularly gross piece of "malignity" on the part of the Academy Council or of the Hangers. Summary castigation is administered freely to the institution on occasions of this sort, and the indignant letter writers are generally further exasperated at the reticence shown by the members of the Academy in answering the indictments.

On one such occasion, however, during the Presidency of Sir Francis Grant, a reply was given with considerable effect. Some pictures from Australia had arrived a day later than that appointed by the Academy for the admission of works for exhibition. The newspapers having got hold of information to the effect that the pictures in question had been rejected by the Council as being too late, were filled at once with letters of indignation. John Forster, who at that time happened to be editor of the *Examiner*, meeting Sir Edwin Landseer, said to him, "What's this the Academy has been doing? It must be true; it is so like the Academy"—to which Sir Edwin quietly replied, "Well, it happens to be 'so like the newspapers' that it is not true." As a matter of fact the pictures, although too late in their arrival, had at once been taken into consideration by a special order of the Council.



A well-known critic, in one of the daily papers, once made the astounding blunder of mistaking in a review of the Grosvenor Gallery, a water-colour drawing for an oil-painting. The opportunity for the exposure of this blunder was eagerly seized by Whistler, who, in one of these little letters which he used to sign with a barb-tailed butterfly, expressed a hope that the editor of the paper would look after its critic when he went wandering up Bond Street and dropped casually into the Grosvenor Gallery. He added that if the young man did not know the difference between an oil and a water-colour painting by the sight, he might have learned to do so by the smell, or might at least have asked the policeman on duty at the door. It was rather amusing that after Whistler's death these very critics whose scalps he so delighted in taking should at once have burst forth into a chorus of gushing and exaggerated praise for works of which during his lifetime they had scarcely taken any notice.

In the old days when it was the fashion for figure painters to choose for their pictures subjects of dramatic interest, taken from history or from celebrated works of fiction, with long explanatory quotations inserted in the catalogues, the task for the writers of *critiques* was a far easier one. For though their knowledge of the subtleties of the painter's art might be limited, they could at any rate descant freely on the historic accuracy of the artist's representations of the scene, the truth or falsehood shown by him in the expressions or character of the various figures, or on the correct-

ness of the rendering of the costumes and accessories. There was, in fact, plenty to write about, plenty wherewith to make up an article which could be read with a certain amount of interest by the general public. Tom Taylor was a very good type of the art critic of those days. He knew really very little about painting. His taste in everything relating to the colouring, execution, and quality of a picture was poor, and he frequently made egregious errors of judgment in these matters; but his wonderful memory, his feeling for drama, and the intimate acquaintance which he possessed with literature of every sort, served him in good stead, and he turned out articles of an interesting character with considerable ability.

Personally, Tom Taylor was warm-hearted, enthusiastic, and accomplished in every way; he was one of the hardest workers I ever met; his imagination and rapidity of thought were very remarkable. I saw much of him in my younger days, both in town and country, and shall ever feel indebted to him for the care and trouble he took in editing the correspondence and the unfinished "Autobiographical Recollections" of my father.

When "The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais," by his son, appeared in 1899, I was very much astonished at discovering, from sundry letters from the great artist to his wife, how keenly Millais had resented the abusive criticism which his pictures received in the press during the earlier period of his career. From

what I knew of him at that time, and from my long acquaintance with him in after life, I should have supposed that he would have been the last man in the world to care two straws how his works were treated by the critics. From the very first his pictures sold well and freely. They met with the highest praise from such men as Ruskin and Thackeray; they were always well hung in the Exhibitions, and the man himself and all his works were simply adored by the entire rising generation of artists. One would have thought that under such circumstances Millais might easily have afforded to ignore the remarks of some few critics, for many of the newspapers, at the very same time, contained most favourable notices of his works; but, although in his general letters he professes for himself unconcern about the matter, it is very evident that the abusive remarks rankled in his heart, as will be seen from the following quotation from a letter to his wife, written in 1856, the year in which his picture, "Autumn Leaves," was exhibited.

"I hope this will come before you see the *Times*, which is more wickedly against me this year than ever. It is well understood here that the criticism is not above board, and that there is more than mere ignorance in the man. Beyond a sudden surprise on seeing the criticism, I was not much disturbed, as it has been my fate from the first, and probably will be to the last, to meet with ungenerous treatment from newspapers."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais," vol. i. p. 298.



It is quite true that one or two members of the Academy were at that time blind to Millais's great merits, and frequently spoke disparagingly of them, and on this account he was led to infer that the whole Academy was somehow mixed up with the press in a cabal against him, for in the same letter he says—

“I am not at all sure it does not spring from the Academy itself; indeed, there is every reason to suppose it does. The envy and this determined cabal against me make me long to return home. In a word, I have the whole of the Academy (with one or two exceptions) against me, which makes all intercourse with them unpleasant.”<sup>1</sup>

That the Royal Academy should ever have been in league with the press is a contingency which, one would have thought, no sane man could have possibly entertained for a single moment. And yet when Millais wrote this he had been elected an Associate of the Academy; not by the votes only of the “one or two exceptions,” but by a large majority of the members, when he was but twenty-five years old, an almost “record” age for an Associate, the only other instance being that of Sir Edwin Landseer, who was also only twenty-five when he was elected an Associate.

In reading this part of “The Life and Letters” it is evident that the author of the work is under the impression that his father had to fight his way to success through quite unprecedented and determined opposition, that rivals and press-

<sup>1</sup> “The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais,” vol. i. p. 299.



writers combined to thwart and destroy him in every way. In reality, I think that success and fame were never won more rapidly or with less opposition of any sort than by the leader of the Pre - Raphaelite Brotherhood, the future President of that Academy which in his last speech he declared he had loved so long and so dearly that he felt a warm affection even for the old easels and boxes in its Schools.

Millais was always impulsive and free of speech on any subject which excited his feelings for the moment; and it must be taken into account that in writing these letters to his wife he perhaps purposely exaggerated his feelings of exasperation, partly to save her from the annoyance she might feel if she came across the articles in the newspapers accidentally, and partly to show off, to her, his own self-reliance and determination to succeed in spite of any opposition he might encounter. I cannot help feeling that, at any rate, the mature wisdom and common sense which he manifested in his later years would have caused him to regret the publication of such sentiments of his youth.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### NATURAL ENEMIES OF THE ACADEMY—*continued*

EULOGISTIC criticisms in the newspapers may sometimes be very advantageous to a young beginner in the profession by bringing him into notice; defamatory ones, on the other hand, I think do but little harm to any artist who has already obtained a fair amount of reputation for his works. They are, at any rate, an advertisement, and if one paper condemns him there are always others to be found which sound his praises. From my own experience I can truly say that I have never known a newspaper article, whether favourable or otherwise, influence the sale of a picture in any way.

I can recall the words of caution that Sir Francis Grant gave, in one of his addresses to the students, against paying too much attention to the remarks of the newspapers. He likened such remarks to the ephemeridæ bred in stagnant pools, which died on the day of their birth, and were forgotten directly afterwards; the students' future works, he declared, would, if they were good, live for ever.

I also remember always what Hook once

said to me, on the same subject, that the only opinion an artist need value in any way was the genuine one that his brother artists held about his works; this, he said, would invariably be found to be the right one in course of time.

During the Presidency of Sir Martin Shee the Royal Academy was subjected to a series of attacks of a most virulent and radical nature from sundry members of the House of Commons. Amongst the Academy's enemies of this class Joseph Hume was by far the most persistent and unreasonable. He commenced his attack by discussions at public meetings and in the House of Commons, displaying much unreasoning censure and malevolence against a body of whose proceedings he knew scarcely anything. He demanded the free opening of the Exhibition on one day in the week, on the ground that the Academy were occupying rooms built at the expense of the Government. Luckily, the Academy had at the time a President eminently qualified to meet attacks of this sort. Sir Martin at once pointed out, in answer to Mr Hume's argument, that when King George III. disposed of his *private* property, Old Somerset House, to the nation he stipulated for accommodation being provided, in the new building, then erected by the public, for the Academy; and the exchange of such habitation for another similarly provided, nearly sixty years afterwards, could not alter the relative position of the institution and the public. He also declared that the free opening of the Exhibition on one day in the week would



be disastrous to the finances of the Academy, rendering the free education of the students in the Schools and the grants given in charity no longer possible.

Mr Hume had also stated that a portion of the expenses of maintaining the Academy were supplied by the public. With respect to this mis-statement, which had an apparent reference to parliamentary grants, the President replied, in a letter to Mr Hume:—

“You are reported, Sir, to be as peculiarly conversant in the lore that relates to the outlay of the national funds as you are vigilant in preventing their misappropriation. Can you adduce, in support of your assertion, any grant of the public money to the Royal Academy? Can you prove that a single shilling has been contributed by the Government towards the maintenance of that institution since its first establishment? If you cannot do this, Sir, you must allow me to express my wonder by what extraordinary process of misconception—by what peculiar impulse of inaccuracy—you have been led publicly to make such an assertion. . . .”

It was said of Shee, by one of his contemporaries, “that he would have distinguished himself far more at the Bar than he did at his easel,” and certainly the Academy had at that time a rare good fighting President.

The controversy went on for several years, both in Parliament and out of it; a few disappointed artists swelled the ranks of the enemy, the most conspicuous of whom was the highly



gifted but unfortunate Benjamin Robert Haydon, the victim, not, as is generally supposed, of the Academy, but of his own inordinate vanity. He received his training in the Academy Schools, and was a fellow student of Wilkie and Jackson, with whom he would have, without doubt, become also a fellow member of the institution, but for the disappointment that he felt on account of his first important work, his "Dentatus," not having been hung in the large room at the Exhibition in Somerset House. It had been placed in a first-rate place in the anteroom only, and his mortification at this treatment was so great that he regarded it at once as a planned attempt on the part of the Academy to crush him; from that time forth he became implacable to the Academy and all its ways.

The situation given to Haydon's picture in the anteroom was one, my father declared, that any young artist, with ordinary common sense, would have considered to be highly honorable. Nothing, however, short of the post of honour, in the large room, would have satisfied the ambition of the painter's disordered brain; but the varying fortunes of his after career and its sad ending are related in full in his "Autobiography," and I need not trouble my readers with them here.

In former days at the Pantheon, in Oxford Street, there used to be a small collection of pictures, open free to the public, which I often visited during my student days, and on the staircase at this place hung, unsold, Haydon's

magnificent painting of the raising of Lazarus, which made a lasting impression on my brain; I can even now vividly recall the expressions of the heads of our Lord, the two sisters, and of Lazarus himself, the last, which was painted from Haydon's half-starved pupil, Bewick, being as fine and weirdly dramatic as it is possible to conceive.

In Parliament several other members joined Hume in his attack on the Academy; among others a Mr Ewart was very active, and at last in a very thin House on the 15th of March 1839, they succeeded in obtaining an order for the returns of all matters connected with the finances of the Academy. The order was to this effect:—

“A return of the amount of money received for admission, and of the number of persons who visited the Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts in each of the years 1836, 1837, and 1838, distinguishing the entrance-money from the proceeds of the sale of catalogues, together with the amount paid in salaries and perquisites to each person employed in the establishment of each of those years; and the average number of students who have attended the Life School and that of the Antique in each of those years.”

The Academy at once sent in a petition which was presented and supported by Sir R. H. Inglis, member for the University of Oxford for the rescission of this order. Many attacks and counter-attacks took place, and several other petitions both for and against the Academy were sent in to Parliament. After

several debates on the subject, in which a number of distinguished speakers took part, among others Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell, the order was rescinded in a thin House, thirty - three members voting for the return of the order, and thirty - eight for rescinding it. This for a time put an end to the dispute, but in July 1844, another attempt was made by Mr Hume, who proposed an address to the Crown praying her Majesty to withdraw her royal favour from the Royal Academy on the ground that it had departed from the original intentions of its founder, and was no longer of any service to the cause of art in the country ; and, as a consequence, entreating that it might be ejected from the apartments assigned to it in Trafalgar Square. Sir Robert Peel, being then in office, kindly undertook to furnish himself with ample statements to refute this unworthy attempt, but, happily, these were not required, for on this occasion Mr Hume failed, owing to a count-out in the middle of his speech, and as on a second attempt he met with no support he did not venture to press the matter to a division.

It should be noted that this long series of attacks on the Academy took place between the years 1832 and 1844, a period when the patronage of living artists, with the exception of portrait painters, was at a very low ebb.

It is always at times in which a considerable amount of discontent prevails in the profession that the Academy comes in for the blame



of such suffering as artists have to endure. In the 'forties patronage again began rapidly to increase. The Pre-Raphaelite movement commenced, and Ruskin's pen was already at work fanning the enthusiasm of art lovers. Large fortunes were being made in Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool; large houses were being built. There was a growing dislike to the mass of spurious "Old Masters," to the sham Claudes, the doubtful Canalettis, and to the "furniture pictures" that had been so much in fashion since the days of Sir George Beaumont.

The fingers of the picture buyers had been frequently burned over their bargains, and the new order of rich patrons that arose refused to have anything to do with them. For the future they would buy at any rate genuine works, the works of living men, with their signatures, properly vouched for, upon them. The result was that artists had a grand time during the 'fifties and 'sixties. My father made more by his paintings during the last ten or twelve years of his life than he had earned throughout almost the whole of the rest of his career; it was, indeed, the only period of his life in which he was enabled to put by money at all.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### NATURAL ENEMIES OF THE ACADEMY—*continued*

IN 1857 Commissioners were appointed by Parliament to enquire into the question of the increase of space that had become necessary for the accommodation of the National Gallery. After some discussion as to the site of such new buildings as might be required for this purpose, it was decided that the Royal Academy would have to be removed from Trafalgar Square, and that the whole of the buildings should, after certain additions, be devoted to the housing of the national collection. After some communications between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Charles Eastlake, an arrangement was made as to the removal of the Royal Academy. Part of the ground round Burlington House was offered it in lieu of the one it formerly held under the Crown. The Academy at once agreed to this proposal, offering to build, at its own expense, the galleries that would be necessary for the exhibition of pictures, together with rooms for the accommodation of the Schools, provided that the site acquired should be freehold or held under a long lease.

On 8th February 1859 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the completion of this arrangement in the House of Commons, and it was agreed to by the House as a "just, proper, and honest one."

On the 4th of March following this announcement, Lord Lyndhurst, the venerable son of one of the early members of the Royal Academy (John Singleton Copley), delivered in the House of Lords a speech in which he most ably disposed of the numerous misapprehensions that existed as to the legal status of the Academy, vindicating the justice of its cause and of its actions in every particular in which these had been called in question by its adversaries.

The aged Lord Chancellor's speech was heard with the closest attention, greeted with loud applause by the House, and received a high compliment from Lord Derby, who at that time was at the head of the Government.

After this complete and exhaustive vindication of the actions of the Royal Academy by Lord Lyndhurst, and his lucid explanation of the legal status which the Institution held towards the Crown and the Government, no further attempts were made by its adversaries for a long time to bring Parliamentary influence to interfere with its arrangements. It was not, indeed, until the year 1905, when patronage for living artists' works was once more at a standstill, that a Parliamentary Committee was, at the request of Lord Lytton, appointed to enquire into the administration of the Chantrey fund by the

Councils of the Academy. Of course, when numbers of artists were finding the greatest difficulty in the disposal of their works, the selection of pictures by living artists to be purchased for the Chantrey bequest by the Council became a veritable bone of contention. One or two fortunate persons were gratified every year, while the ranks of the disappointed swelled to hundreds. Unscrupulous misrepresentations appeared once again in the newspapers and magazines, in which the Councils of the Academy were charged with mal-administration of the funds with which Chantrey had entrusted them; their taste and judgment in the selections of the works purchased were impugned; and the real intentions of the testator were so twisted and contorted that I believe Sir Francis himself would have scarcely recognised them.

The Committee failed entirely to bring home to the Councils of the Academy the least particle of evidence of a single legal infringement of the clauses of the will during the twenty-seven years in which they had had the administration of the fund in their hands. The dispute resolved itself simply into a question of taste between members of the Academy, artists of great experience, and an irresponsible body of men, for the most part avowed enemies of the Academy, composed of newspaper critics and discontented and disappointed artists outside the pale of the Academy. A few perfectly useless and cumbrous stipulations were proposed by the Committee, which with some modifications were



accepted by the Academy, and the quarrel fizzled out, just as might have been expected from the first by any one who knew anything at all about the subject in dispute.

A misconception apparently arose in the minds of this Committee with regard to the salary of £300 a year bequeathed by Chantrey to the President of the Academy, which I should here like to explain. They imagined that this bequest to the President was intended as an emolument to him to defray what expenses he might incur in searching for suitable pictures for purchase out of the main funds of the bequest. There is nothing in the will to justify such a supposition. Up to Chantrey's death the Presidents of the Academy had received no salary whatever for the very arduous duties they performed, and Chantrey during his lifetime had frequently expressed his opinion of the injustice of this, and had intimated his intentions to do, by his will, something to rectify it. That at Chantrey's death the members of the Academy, many of whom were his most intimate friends, knew what his object was in making the bequest, is clearly shown by their voting unanimously that this salary of £300 a year should be paid at once out of the funds of the Society without waiting for Lady Chantrey's death, on which event Chantrey's whole bequest was to take effect, and this was so paid for over thirty years; and when the money from the bequest at length became available the Academy decided to continue the grant from its own funds in addition to the



£300 from Chantrey's bequest. Sir Francis Grant thus received £600 as his yearly salary. Chantrey's reason for directing that his bequest to the President should not come into operation until after his wife's death was that he wished her to enjoy the whole of his fortune during the remainder of her life, for no more devoted husband than the great sculptor ever lived.

Whenever our national art has suffered badly from neglect or want of patronage during the hundred and forty-four years of the existence of the Royal Academy, it has been invariably the custom for unreflecting and disappointed people to throw the entire blame on that unfortunate institution.

It was at one of these periods of distress that poor Haydon denounced the Academy as a clique of portrait painters, banded together for the express purpose of ruining him by depreciating his large historical works. As a matter of fact the members of the Academy at that time were themselves suffering from the want of patronage, many of them, who would gladly have indulged in historical subjects, being driven to portraiture as a means of livelihood.

It was surely not the fault of the Academy that Stothard, in default of other means of support, was compelled to devote almost the whole of his time and talents to the illustration of books. Nor can we blame the Institution that the noble and imaginative genius of Flaxman met with no encouragement from the connoisseurs and patrons of his time. The merits of both these men were

recognised at once by the Royal Academy, in the ranks of which body they for many years faithfully discharged the duties allotted to them in the enjoyment of the love and admiration of all their colleagues.

At the present time the demand for works by living artists has again sunk to a very low ebb, and portraiture is again almost the only branch of art by which a livelihood can be obtained. A preponderance in any Exhibition of portraits, however fine they may be as works of art, is scarcely appreciated by the ordinary public; whilst the critics, at the same time, accuse the Council of the Academy of want of taste and judgment, and blame it for not having more works of poetic and imaginative character on its walls.

If these grumblers could only see the material with which the Councils have to deal, and hear the unfeigned cheers of delight with which any work of more than ordinary originality or imagination when it comes before them is hailed, they would at least allow that these members of the Academy were doing their very best to render the ensuing Exhibition as fine and as interesting as they possibly could.

Abuse of the Royal Academy would, I feel confident, soon go out of fashion if more well-intentioned and patriotically-minded gentlemen of wealth could be induced to emulate the example of Mr Vernon or Mr Sheepshanks by devoting a portion of their time and money to the formation of well-chosen collections of the

works of living artists. Such a collection, besides affording pleasure to the collector during his lifetime would, if left to the nation, prove of far more service, as a means of the intellectual education of the people in general, than any number of those "free libraries," which at present do little more than provide an unlimited supply of second-rate works of fiction to the wives and daughters of the lower middle classes.

Criticism of all institutions is natural, is perennial, and is good for them. Much more venerable establishments than the Royal Academy have to stand considerable criticism. The Throne itself is not exempt. The Church, the Inns of Court, the Universities, the Public Schools are for ever being made targets; some of them go on by the mere virtue of their antiquity—they have grown up with the growth of the nation and have never been "created." But the Academy was a deliberate "creation" and of comparatively late date. Can a critic point to such another creation that has so well stood the test of time, and so well continued to fulfil its intended functions?

It was a creation that took place at a period of English history remarkable alike both for its Art and Literature. The hall-mark that is found on the beautiful silver ornaments of that period is the same as that borne by the Royal Academy—the hall-mark of King George the Third. Himself a liberal patron of Art in all its branches, he chose to call the new creation "His

Academy," and became indeed a veritable "nursing father" to the Institution during its infancy. The Royal Academy happily still enjoys the favour of the Sovereign. The Sovereign is still the Head of the Institution, and to him its chief officers have yet the right of direct personal access. That it still possesses the confidence of a vast majority of the artists of the United Kingdom is proved by the ever-increasing number of works that are annually submitted to the judgment of its Councils for exhibition on its walls. It will, in my opinion, be an evil day indeed for our National School of Art if ever, through any untoward eventualities, its doors should be closed, and names no longer be added to the ancient roll, the first signature on which is that of Sir Joshua Reynolds.





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